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THE DEADLY
HANDS OF
KUNG FU
OCT. No. 29
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THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU

...in the
ARENA
OF
DEATH!

IRON FIST vs
SHANG-CHI...

MARVEL

ALL NEW MARTIAL ARTS ACTION!

NOREM



STAN LEE presents THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU

vol 1/No. 29

Oct. 1976

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SHANG-CHI & IRON FIST: "TO SLAY THE SAVIOR!"

By Doug Moench & Rudy Nebres

A time bomb set to explode in the halls of Parliament, and the one man who can prevent it has been captured by the insidious Dr. Fu Manchu! While below the streets of London, Shang-Chi and Iron Fist face the Labyrinth of Death only to confront—Iron Mask!

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"RIP-OFF AT THE O.K. BOX OFFICE!" 28

Dauntless Don McGregor presents an extended critique of the latest martial arts movie madness, THE STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER.

"FIGHTING ARTS REVIEW!" 40

David Kraft gives us the latest lowdown on upcoming items in the field of flashing fists.

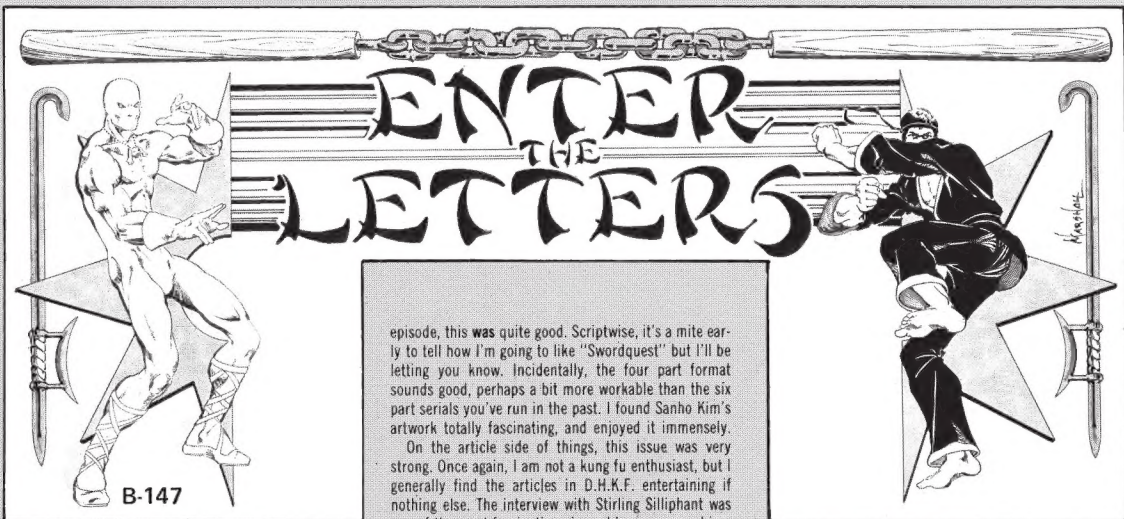
SONS OF THE TIGER: "FLESH OF MY FLESH!"

By Bill Mantlo, Ron Wilson,
Sonny Trinidad & Rudy Mesina

The White Tiger faces the wrath of an ugly mob in the wake of a tragic death. And beyond the mayhem awaits the mystery of El Tigre!

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Dear John and Bill,
ENTER THE PRAISE!

Yeah, I know it's a silly opening, but what the hey, we're all friends around here, aren't we? Issue #25 of D.H.K.F. was clearly one of your best efforts. In fact the issue was so near-perfect that I think all you needed was a nifty Neal Adams cover. The Earl Norem cover wasn't bad, mind you, merely lackluster. Now shifting inside...

"Samurai" by Bill Mantlo and Pat Broderick—fabulous all the way! Ever since Bill has begun to regularly write for DEADLY HANDS, the magazine's really started to move. It's been awhile since I wrote, and in the meantime, Bill has become the Sparky Lyle of the color comics with a great number of wins and few losses. With "Samurai", Bill reaffirms his strong bid for rookie-of-the-year honors, scripting division. There's a lot to this story, and it was masterfully told by Pat Broderick. Every costume, every setting, everything looked absolutely authentic. Pat is a very underrated talent, and this job convinces me that you guys should definitely give the man more work. I particularly liked the use of the Fates in the story. The lack of an overt explanation added greatly to their playing a highly atmospheric role in the tale, and of course, the resolution presented in the last two panels was well handled. Unlike many of the things you get a chance to write at Marvel, here you were able to cull a single event from your characters' lives, using long range effects for dramatic impact.

"Swordquest" wasn't quite so good, but don't feel too badly, John, you've obviously put a lot of thought into the structure of the series, and as an introductory

episode, this was quite good. Scriptwise, it's a mite early to tell how I'm going to like "Swordquest" but I'll be letting you know. Incidentally, the four part format sounds good, perhaps a bit more workable than the six part serials you've run in the past. I found Sanho Kim's artwork totally fascinating, and enjoyed it immensely.

On the article side of things, this issue was very strong. Once again, I am not a kung fu enthusiast, but I generally find the articles in D.H.K.F. entertaining if nothing else. The interview with Stirling Silliphant was one of the most fascinating pieces I have ever read in a Marvel magazine. The man has a lot to say and says it remarkably well. Job well done, Jim Whitmore. And to round things out, I found Dave Kraft's "Fighting Arts Review" column interesting, as always. I enjoyed John's "Before the Quest" article and Archie's editorials are indispensable.

Conclusion: Damn good issue, and there's not another thing I can think of to say about it. Excelsior! Best Wishes

Fred G. Hembeck
48 Custer Rd.
Buffalo, N.Y. 14215

And it's a good thing you can't, friend Fred, 'cause you just about put the lid on it all with your cover-to-cover commentary. Bill Mantlo and Pat Broderick send their side by side "thank you" for their somewhat offbeat efforts on "Samurai". You're right, that when you deal with a one-shot situation such as that was, the possibilities for making the DEFINITIVE statement on a given character presents itself with such temptation that few indeed are the writers who can resist the call. Nice to notice you've picked up on it.

Joyful John Warner, our budding bigwig in this department was wondering what you've thought of the next installment or two of his "Swordquest" saga. Considering the nature of the concept, it's a unique series, and somewhat experimental, so write in and let us know what you're thinking. You know how insecure these writer/editors can be.

Dear Marvels of Kung Fu,

You surprised me. I'm not much of a weapons fan, but your "samurai" issue was excellent. This is especially surprising because I am a big fan of the Sons of

the Tiger, Iron Fist, and Shang-Chi who were nowhere to be found that time around.

I am looking forward to the next installment of "Swordquest" though I regret that Sanho Kim will not be drawing the rest of the episodes. I had hoped that in the introduction "Before the Quest" John Warner would mention what issue of what Warren mags those martial arts stories appeared in. Well, John?

It was pleasing to see ju (jiu)-jitsu in action. Your definition (early aikido-judo type art) was good. Too few people realize that the ki, holds, and locks play a big part in jiu-jitsu. Some think of it only as the "poor-man's judo" which it definitely is not. It too, has striking and kicking, including short punches, with emphasis on atemi-waza (my translation, hitting them where it hurts!) lacking in many branches of kung fu and karate.

On another topic, I wish you would not let golden opportunities slip by like you have. Remember how DRACULA LIVES had an ad for the Giant-Size SPIDER-MAN that guest starred Drac? Yet for the Giant-Size SPIDER-MAN featuring Shang-Chi you had no advertisements in this title. Ditto for MARVEL TEAM-UP #31 with Iron Fist, and #40 with Sons of the Tiger. And then there was the recent Shang-Chi/Iron Fist team-up in Giant-Size MASTER OF KUNG FU #5, about which nothing was mentioned in these pages either. Come on, let the readers of your black-and-white books know of the color comics they might not know about, but would certainly be turned on to if they did. And above all, let it be known before the fact. Frankly, I feel both Doug Moench and Chris Claremont do better writing on their color titles (MASTER OF KUNG FU and IRON FIST respectively) than they do in DEADLY HANDS. Don't be afraid to tell your readers about your color books, Marvel. Sincerely,

Robert Mallory
612Stowe Ave.
Baldwin, N.Y. 11516

Glad to hear you enjoyed that "different" issue of DEADLY HANDS, Bob, so stick with us, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

Thanks for the sincere concern shown on your part with regards to our not taking advantage of the chances to plug our color line-up of calamitous comics in these black-and-white pages. As is obvious, we do have only a limited amount of space, but we are working diligently on the problem. In the near future there will be definite advertisements for our four-color comics (both martial arts oriented and others) with specific titles of particular interest to you rabid readers chosen for display.

Of course you've already seen our artfully designed new full-page advertisement in this title and/or our sister b&w's, featuring the current line-up of Marvel's magazine stars with full cover reproduction for you connoisseurs. And soon the "Bulpen Bulletins" page in the Marvel color books will be containing information on our black-and-whites to let the unfortunate few who pick those titles up know that even more thrills and excitement await them just across from the comics section on the magazine rack. Even Marvel's own fan mag F.O.O.M. (Friends of 'ol Marvel) will be spreading the word soon, and if you haven't mailed in your subscription to that strange sounding little publication, you're only missing out on the best articles and features on your favorite Marvel stars you're likely to see, not to mention the most up-to-the-minute news items on secret Bulpen projects and the like. Don't delay, send today.

Mighty Marvel's got the burners blasting on all levels, and we wouldn't dream of taking off without you.

Dear sirs,

My letter is in response to the editorial by John Warner in the #26th issue of D.H.K.F. You have many good series in your magazine "Shang-Chi" and "White Tiger" being two of the best. I think you should keep the "White Tiger" saga, but I still like "Sons of the Tiger" also. Suggestion: maybe you could alternate these two concepts in upcoming issues. Your six part story starring Iron Fist was fantastic, and I can envision the same sort of thing with other characters.

Like I said, I am basically a comics fan and my interest in the martial arts stops when it leaves the comics medium. But the articles here are not so much on the martial arts but on the martial arts in the entertainment field. This does hold my attention more than articles on how to throw people around like loose wallpaper. But why don't you do some articles on martial arts in the comics entertainment field. You have all of your research right in your offices. Explain the facts behind Shang-Chi or Iron Fist or something. Or try an article relating the history of martial arts in comics. Another suggestion is that, as I understand it, this stuff is built on several philosophies. Why don't you do an article on the philosophies.

Keith Grestl
527 W. Ostrander Ave.
Syracuse, N.Y. 13205

Dear Marvel,

I am very upset to see the continued break-up of the Sons of the Tiger team. Please consider my request and reunite them. Fast!

John Hazlett
Harlingen, Texas

These two letters are typical of a sizable portion of mail which has come in lately from people wondering about the status of our formerly fighting Tiger Sons. Well there's good news a comin' ladies and gents. Before long our titanic trio of martial arts masters will be reuniting, though the nature of their reforming and the circumstances surrounding it will just have to remain mysteries for now. Suffice to say that whatever you expect—don't, you're wrong. Who says this isn't the Marvel Age of evasive answers?

I

Dear People,

I write in reference to the issue raised by Edward A. Fleiss in issue #26. He asked if Ta Mo was the same person as Bodhidharma. Ta Mo is the Chinese name for the gentleman in question. Daruma Taishie is Japanese and Bodhidharma is of Indian origin. I refer you to A Dictionary of Buddhism, by T.O. Ling. Also, in the index of D.T. Suguki's book, *Studies in Zen*.

I would also like to comment on the fact that magazines rarely give references for their information. For those of us interested in further reading it would be of great help.

Thanks.

Chris Picotte

Dear Archie, Joh, Raph and Bulpen:

Since I am basically a comics fan, those will take top priority for comments.

What are the reasons for Bill's changing the Sons of the Tiger into the White Tiger? I suppose that I admire the courage to have them realistically break up, considering whatever held them together was cardboard and superficial, but the transition seems a bit forced. White Tiger has yet to begin to shine, but the potential is showing. The reason why he has yet to excite me is because during the transition stage the focus of the

story is being spread thin, in order to cover all of the characters. Once the transition is over with, and the full concentration is on White Tiger, then things should be mighty interesting.

Jim Sherman would become enjoyable if he were to become the regular artist. Although the actual execution was sometimes awkward, his sense of layout to tell the story was great. And storytelling is what comics are all about. Next, we are going to be treated to another great storyteller, George Perez. But see if you can't get Jim a regular assignment.

The habit of alternating mini-series in the back is a great idea. But avoid Shang-Chi and Iron Fist and develop new ideas. Short mini-series are nice because they allow the characters to reach a realistic climax without anything forced to insure the continuation of the series.

"Swordquest" is tremendous. John seems to have worked everything out alright. His problems from before, in particular the tedious pacing found in some SON OF SATAN stories, were enjoyably absent here. I found the characterizations of all but Cho Yun unfortunately on the one-dimensional side, but the effort was there and it was great for only the second installment. John's script quite nicely built up the atmosphere of the thing. It's separation from the other Marvel heroes was nice; no flamboyant powers and costumes, just blood and guts characters. Much as I love Marvel's super-heroes, this was quite refreshing. It also hit the target of what DHQK needed right on the head. Oh yeah, Tony was great.

Like I said, I am basically a comics fan and my interest in the martial arts stops when it leaves the comics medium. But the articles here are not so much on the martial arts but on the martial arts in the entertainment field. This does hold my attention more than articles on how to throw people around like loose wallpaper. But why don't you do some articles on martial arts in the comics entertainment field. You have all of your research right in your offices. Explain the facts behind Shang-Chi or Iron Fist or something. Or try an article relating the history of martial arts in comics. Another suggestion is that, as I understand it, this stuff is built on several philosophies. Why don't you do an article on the philosophies.

John will do quite nicely. Now that Ralph's in the credits, will he get off of the letters page? If he edits as nicely as he writes letters, and I'm sure he does, then we're in for some fine times.

You know, I'm glad that Marvel has found its own style and pace of black-and-whites, but I sort of miss those old horror and monster books. Any chance of seeing just one of them resurrected?

Peace.

Larry Twiss
227 Fox Run
King of Prussia, Pa. 19408

If you're a fan of the entertainment end of the martial arts spectrum, then we're sure that this issue's mammoth McGregor review of STRANGER AND THE

GUNFIGHTER has got you doing back-flips right now. And there's lots more of the same to be coming at you in future issues as we have our ever-alert staff of article gatherers searching high and low for the latest in martial arts movies, tournaments, and you name it, we'll find it. And hey, if you (plural) happen to be aware of a martial arts event of overwhelming importance in your area, whatever its nature, drop us a line and let us in on the action, too. Keep in touch. Remember, communication is a TWO-way street.

Dear Bulpen:

Issue #26 of DEADLY HANDS was one of the best that I have ever read, and I have been reading this book since its origin.

I am always glad to see articles pertaining to Bruce Lee and this issue had its share. Great inside cover by Rogers, (any chance of Mr. Rogers doing some regular art work in DEADLY HANDS?)

I have always enjoyed the interviews by Jim Whitmore and THE DRAGON IN WAITING and SOUTH OF VANCOUVER were no exceptions. His in-depth coverage in his articles bring them alive and his great insight seems to ask the right questions, the questions we the readers would ask if we were doing the interviews. (Yes Jim, we comic fans do read more than just the comics). Your work on the feature articles is greatly appreciated.

SWORDQUEST PART II was very interesting and very well done but I will save my comment until I have read a few more installments and "the pieces of the puzzle begin to come together."

With the guiding hand of Bill Mantlo I am glad to see that SONS OF THE TIGER: WHITE TIGER have taken the front spot.

Jim Sherman, Jim Sherman, Jim Sherman!!! A big round of applause to Jim Sherman who fit in to the WHITE TIGER strip like a glove. Jim's work is great, terrific!! Hope to see Jim around for many, many more issues to come.

Now that your heads are swelled to the size of a medium armadillo need I say that I enjoyed every part of this issue? You asked for comments you got them!

Charles Novinskie
2120 Stetler Drive
Shamokin, Pa. 17872

Well it's time for our once-a-month mini sermon, which can be summed up in one crystal clear word: WRITE! We truly do need more comments on every facet of this magazine, so don't turn a deaf ear and let others do the deciding for you—get it off your chest and out to us. We read 'em all, and we need 'em all. And just to reinforce that ancient aphorism that nothing's new under the sun, we're still at the same old place:

DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU
Marvel Magazine Group
575 Madison Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10022



Approaching Thirty!

Well, so much for staving off the dreaded deadline doom.

Truth to tell, the fact that the concluding chapter of *SWORDQUEST* is not in this issue is more preventative deadline doom medicine than an actual case of the job being late. Due to the peculiarities of scheduling that happen from time to time, Tony DeZuniga in the Philippines got swamped (and I don't mean by a monsoon) with something over 250 pages due in just over a month.

top secret project (also for the color line) with Roy Thomas and Gil Kane.

But the Rambunctious one has anything but deserted the Black-and-White department. He's not only working on a one-shot back-up for *DEADLY HANDS*, but he and none other than Big John Buscema will be collaborating on an all-new series as a back-up for our newest, most sensational Black-and-White mag — *THE RAMPAGING HULK*. What that back-up feature is

DEADLY HANDS #31) is already in the house and has been the talk of the bullpen ever since. We promise things are gonna start moving fast with a new direction, new characters and a whole new look. We think you're going to be impressed...

... which makes this as good as any place to make a special announcement. The *SONS OF THE TIGER* will be reunited as a team (and wait until you see where the White Tiger fits in)! Although we've had countless letters demanding this be done, we really did have this planned all along. Course, we're not going to give away just how they get back together — heck, that would be telling.

Stay with us, people. It's that old Marvel cliché that keeps rearing its well-worn head, but I never felt better about saying it than I do right now...

... the best is yet to come. And how!
Until then, keep the peace.

— JOHN WARNER, EDITOR.



NEXT ISSUE

The conclusion to
SWORDQUEST!

George Perez
returns to
**THE SONS OF
THE TIGER**

Plus special fotos, facts and
features!

All in:

**THE DEADLY HANDS
OF
KUNG FU #30**

On sale October 14

Friends, even Mr. Lightning himself, Jack Kirby, might think twice about that kind of workload. So, although I hated to break the continuity in the series for yet another issue, I decided to give Tony more time to do a less rushed effort. I hope it proves worth the wait. I think it will be.

In the meantime, I don't think you'll be especially unhappy with what appears in its place. I've lost track of how many requests we've gotten from readers to see an Iron-Fist/Shang-Chi team-up in the Black-and-White format (something we haven't had since the first *DEADLY HANDS* ANNUAL in the summer of 1974). The job also welcomes Rudy Nebres back to the book, although just a one shot.

Some of you may be wondering what Rudy has been working on during all these months he hasn't been in *DEADLY HANDS*. Well, friends, if you can just hang on for a couple months more, you're going to find out.

Wanting to try something different for a change, Rudy did an issue of the *DR. STRANGE* color book with writer/editor Marv Wolfman, and has been working on a

we're going to keep under our hats for now, but we think you just might be shocked and thrilled. If I sound a mite prideful about *THE RAMPAGING HULK*, pilgrim, it's because I am, with good reason, I think. We've put a lot of work into preparing this project and, if you're expecting it to be a mere carbon copy of the color book (minus the color) — all I can say is, are you going to be in for a jolt!

But I digress (as usual). Suffice it to say that Rudy Nebres is still very much with us — and we wouldn't have it any other way.

Last, but certainly not least, we can hardly have a pre-thirtieth-issue editorial without talking about *SONS OF THE TIGER*. Why not, you may ask. Because issue thirty, after too long a delay, is where the series really starts moving again. Next issue, George Perez returns once more — but only for one issue.

WHAT???

'Tis true, but there is no cause for worry. Although no one regrets losing George more than myself and Bill Mantlo, we have an all-new permanent artist set to take over the strip. His first job (a whopping 41 pager for

THE MARTIAL ARTS BATTLE OF THE DECADE!

SHANG-CHI vs. IRON FIST

MASTER OF KUNG FU

THE LIVING WEAPON

"I AM SHANG-CHI, AND THOUGH I HAVE COME TO CALL IRON FIST MY FRIEND, I AM NOW FORCED TO FACE HIM IN COMBAT-- AND, IF POSSIBLE, TO SLAY HIM!"

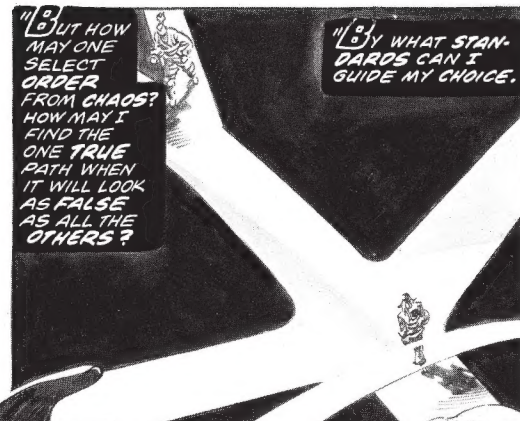
YOU ARE IRON FIST, A MAN WHO HAS FOUND ONE OF HIS FEW FRIENDS IN THE YOUTH CALLED SHANG-CHI. NOW YOU MUST CONFRONT THAT FRIEND IN BATTLE-- A BATTLE TO THE DEATH.

TO SLAY THE SAVIOR



"NO ONE WHO HAS NOT DESIGNED IT, A MAZE OFFERS MANY CHOICES OF CONFUSION."

"I HAVE ARRIVED, NOW, AT SEVERAL OF THOSE CHOICES."



"BUT HOW MAY ONE SELECT ORDER FROM CHAOS? HOW MAY I FIND THE ONE TRUE PATH WHEN IT WILL LOOK AS FALSE AS ALL THE OTHERS?"

"BY WHAT STANDARDS CAN I GUIDE MY CHOICE."

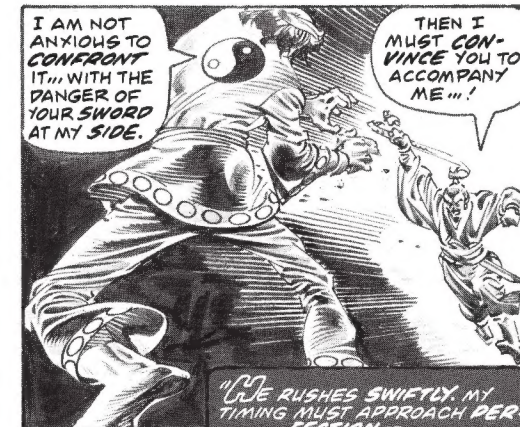


"UHHN. THE CHOICE, IT SEEMS, IS NOT MINE TO MAKE..."

"YOU WILL COME WITH ME, SON OF FU MAN-CHU--"

"-- THIS I HAVE VOWED."

"DANGER AWAITS ME AT THE END OF THIS MAZE, SWORDSMAN."



"I AM NOT ANXIOUS TO CONFRONT IT... WITH THE DANGER OF YOUR SWORD AT MY SIDE."

"THEN I MUST CONVINCE YOU TO ACCOMPANY ME..."

"HE RUSHES SWIFTLY. MY TIMING MUST APPROACH PERFECTION--"



"KIII-YUUU-HAH!!"

"UHHN--!!"

"SHUDD!"

"-- IF I AM TO EVADE HIS SLASH... AND ENSURE THAT HE DOES NOT EVADE MY KICK."



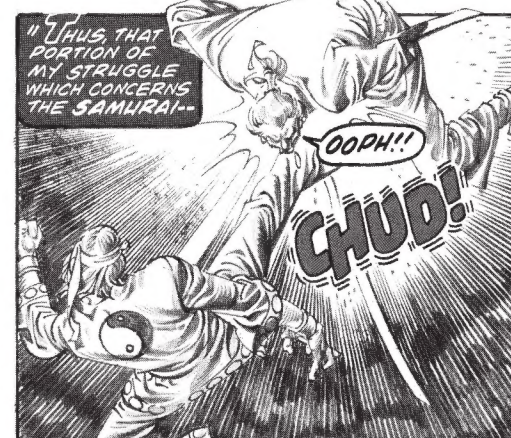
"MY STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST THE SAMURAI ALONE..."

"HYUUH!!"



"I MUST FIGHT AGAINST TIME, AS WELL..."

"FWAP!"



"THUS, THAT PORTION OF MY STRUGGLE WHICH CONCERNS THE SAMURAI--"

"OOPH!!"

"CHUD!"



"-- MUST END QUICKLY."

"FWAK"



"CHOOSE THE CORRIDOR FROM WHICH HE APPEARED..."

"...AS I HAVE DONE WITH EACH OF THE OTHER THREE WHO HAVE CONFRONTED ME WITHIN THIS CHAOS OF WALLS GREETING WALLS."



"MUCH LIKE THE OTHER MAZE I HAVE BEEN FORCED TO WALK *, THIS MEANINGLESS STRUCTURE PROBABLY SHARES THE SAME ORIGIN..."

*GIANT-SIZE MASTER OF KUNG FU #2.
-- JOHN.



"[IT IS A PLAY-THING CREATED BY MY FATHER]"

"...FU MANCHU..."



"... AS IT WAS SUSPECTED BY SIR DENIS NAYLAND SMITH..."

--AIDED ME IN MY VENDETTA AGAINST FU MAN-CHU FOR NEARLY TEN YEARS.

BUT FOR THE LAST FOURTEEN YEARS, HE HAS WORKED EXCLUSIVELY FOR--

-- SCOTLAND YARD ON THE DEMOLITIONS SQUAD.



HERE IS A RECENT PHOTO OF HIM, SHANG-CHI ...



"... WINSTON NEVILLE, ONE OF THE FINEST MEN I'VE EVER KNOWN."

AND YOU BELIEVE HE HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED BY FU MANCHU BECAUSE HE AIDED YOU IN YOUR FIGHT AGAINST MY FATHER ... ?



NOT ENTIRELY, INDEED, IT GOES MUCH FARTHER THAN THAT ...

AT FIRST, SCOTLAND YARD PRESUMED HE HAD BEEN ABDUCTED BY THE I.R.A.--

-- AND THAT PRESUMPTION WAS SHARED HERE AT MIG...



"AFTER ALL, PLANTING BOMBS IS THE I.R.A.'S USUAL METHOD OF OPERATION..."

DUNNO, JOHNNY...
PRETTY STICKY IF Y'
ASK ME...



"...AND SINCE THEY'VE ALL BEEN KNOWN TO EMPLOY KIDNAPPING--"

AYE, IT WAS A RIGHT JOKESTER WHO CONCOCTED THIS BLOODY TICKER! I'M AFRAID IT MIGHT BE BEYOND US ...



"--NEVILLE WOULD BE THE PERFECT CHOICE..."

RIGHT YOU ARE, LADDIE--

--I VOTE WE WAIT THIS ONE OUT 'TIL NEVILLE SHOWS.



"... SINCE HE COULD VERY WELL BE THE ONLY MAN IN BRITAIN WHO CAN PREVENT THE HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT FROM BEING BLASTED INTO A PILE OF BROKEN BRICKS."



BUT THE PARCHMENT WRAPPED AROUND THIS DAGGER I FOUND STUCK IN MY DOOR PROVES THAT THE I.R.A. IS NOT BEHIND THE BOMB...

IT'S AN ULTIMATUM SIGNED BY FU MANCHU. HE'S DEMANDED THAT YOU GO TO HIM, SHANG-CHI--

--OR WINSTON NEVILLE WILL DIE!

WHERE AM I TO GO, SMITH...?



"BELIEVE IT OR NOT, LAD, -- TO A MAN-HOLE AT THE CORNER OF SHAFTESBURY AND WARDOUR..."

SURE YA DON'T WANT ME WITH YOU, CHINA-MAN?

THE MESSAGE SAID NEVILLE WOULD BE SLAIN--





"--THE
MAZE.

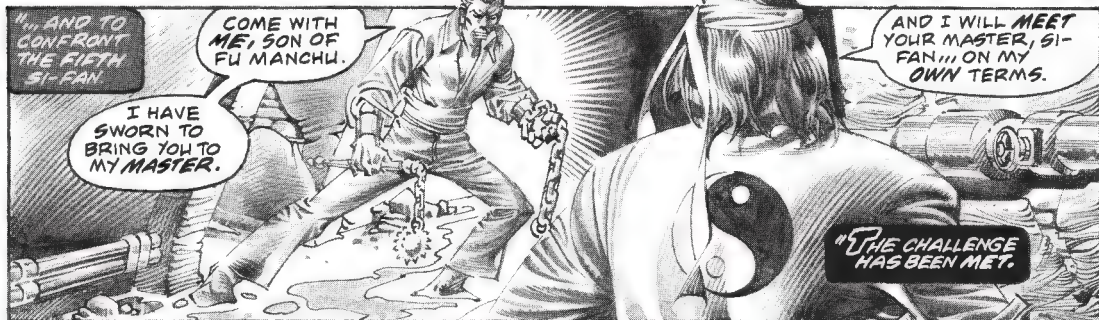


"THE MAZE WHICH IS BUT
A PLAYTHING OF MY
FATHER'S CREATION..."

"... AND THE CHAOS OF
WALLS WITHIN WHICH I
HAVE NOW BATTLED FOUR
OF MY FATHER'S SI-FAN
ASSASSINS..."



"... TO REACH MY
PRESENT POSITION
WITHIN THIS
CONFUSION..."



"... AND TO
CONFRONT
THE FIFTH
SI-FAN."

COME WITH
ME, SON OF
FU MANCHU.

I HAVE
SWORN TO
BRING YOU TO
MY MASTER.

AND I WILL MEET
YOUR MASTER, SI-
FAN... ON MY
OWN TERMS.

"THE CHALLENGE
HAS BEEN MET."

YOU DROP THROUGH THE CIRCLE
OF DARKNESS, IRON FIST, YOUR MIND
FILLED ONLY WITH **QUESTIONS...**



"... AND THE NEED TO
LEARN THE ANSWERS
TO THOSE QUESTIONS."

WHY HERE? WHERE WILL THE
SEWER CONDUITS LEAD--?

BUT THE ANSWERS STILL LIE
AHEAD OF YOU AND SO YOU SLOSH
THROUGH THE GREASY SLIME OF
LONDON'S UNWANTED FILTH.



IT IS A WALK WHICH
VIOLATES YOUR
SENSES--

-- WHICH FILLS
YOU WITH
REVULSION..."

...AND WHICH REMINDS YOU OF A DIFFERENT WALK, EARLIER THIS NIGHT, WHEN YOU PROWLED THE LONDON STREETS IN SEARCH OF A KIDNAPPED WOMAN WHOSE LIFE AND SPIRIT MEANS VERY MUCH TO YOUR OWN EXISTENCE...



...IN SEARCH OF COLLEEN WING... *

* THIS STORY TAKES PLACE BEFORE IRON FIST #7. — JOHN.

YOU REMEMBER, TOO, HOW THAT EARLIER WALK HAD BEEN INTERRUPTED ... BY A DAGGER FROM THE DARKNESS!



YOU HADN'T EXPECTED TO FIND THE PERSON WHO HURLED THE DAGGER.

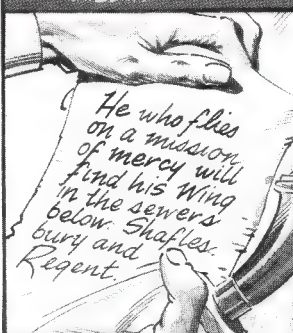
THERE WAS TOO MUCH FOG, TOO MUCH OF NIGHT IN WHICH AN ASSAILANT COULD VANISH...



AND THE DAGGER WASN'T THROWN TO KILL.

...FOR A DEAD MAN WOULD FIND LITTLE USE IN THE TERSE MESSAGE IT CARRIED...

...AND THE BAIT WAS COLLEEN WING.



He who flies on a mission of mercy will find his Wing below. In the sewers bury and Shafles. Regent.

UNSIGNED, CRYPTIC, BUT ITS MEANING WAS CLEAR ... A TRAP.



NOW, YOU HAVE ENTERED THE TRAP-- KNOWINGLY, PERHAPS STUPIDLY-- BUT CERTAINLY OUT OF NECESSITY...



...FOR YOU ARE DETERMINED TO TAKE THE BAIT.

YOU GLIMPSE THE FIGURE, A BLACK SHADOW AMONGST THE LIGHTER GLOOM, AHEAD OF YOU...



WAIT!

WHO ARE YOU--?

THERE IS NO REPLY, ONLY
FLIGHT... INTENDED TO
GOAD AND LURE YOU.



OBLIGINGLY, YOU
PURSUE.

I HAVE
SWORN TO
BRING YOU TO
MY MASTER--

AND I
WILL... EVEN
IF I MUST
DRAG YOU!



"HE SEEKS NOT TO SLAY...
MERELY TO SUBDUCE. THIS HIS
ATTACK IS BLUNT..."



"...ITS FORCE
DIMINISHED..."



"...AND EASILY
STOPPED."



"I MOVE ON, THRU
THE MAZE."

YOU GAIN ON HIM, WONDER-
ING WHERE THIS BIZARRE
CHASE THROUGH SQUALOR
AND FILTH CAN LEAD..."



THEN, AS THE FIGURE
ABRUPTLY BOLTS THRU
A CONCEALED DOORWAY
AMID SOLID BRICK--



YOU LEARN THE ANSWER TO
YOUR QUESTION.

HE HAS LED YOU INTO
A MAZE, IMPOSSIBLY
CONCEALED BEYOND
THE LONDON SEWER
SYSTEM.



BUT THERE ARE STILL
MORE QUESTIONS--OF
GREATER IMPORTANCE.



AND SINCE YOU WANT
THE ANSWERS TO
THESE QUESTIONS...
YOU SCALE THE MAZE
WALL--

--LEADING ON
YOUR QUARRY--



--AS THE
CORRIDOR
DOUBLES
BACK!

ALL RIGHT!
WHO ARE
YOU AND
WHAT'S--



HE IS TERRIFIED--YOU SEE
IT IN HIS WILD EYES--AND
IN THE FRANTIC PUNCH HE
ATTEMPTS TO THROW...

YOU BLOCK THE
FUTILE PUNCH...



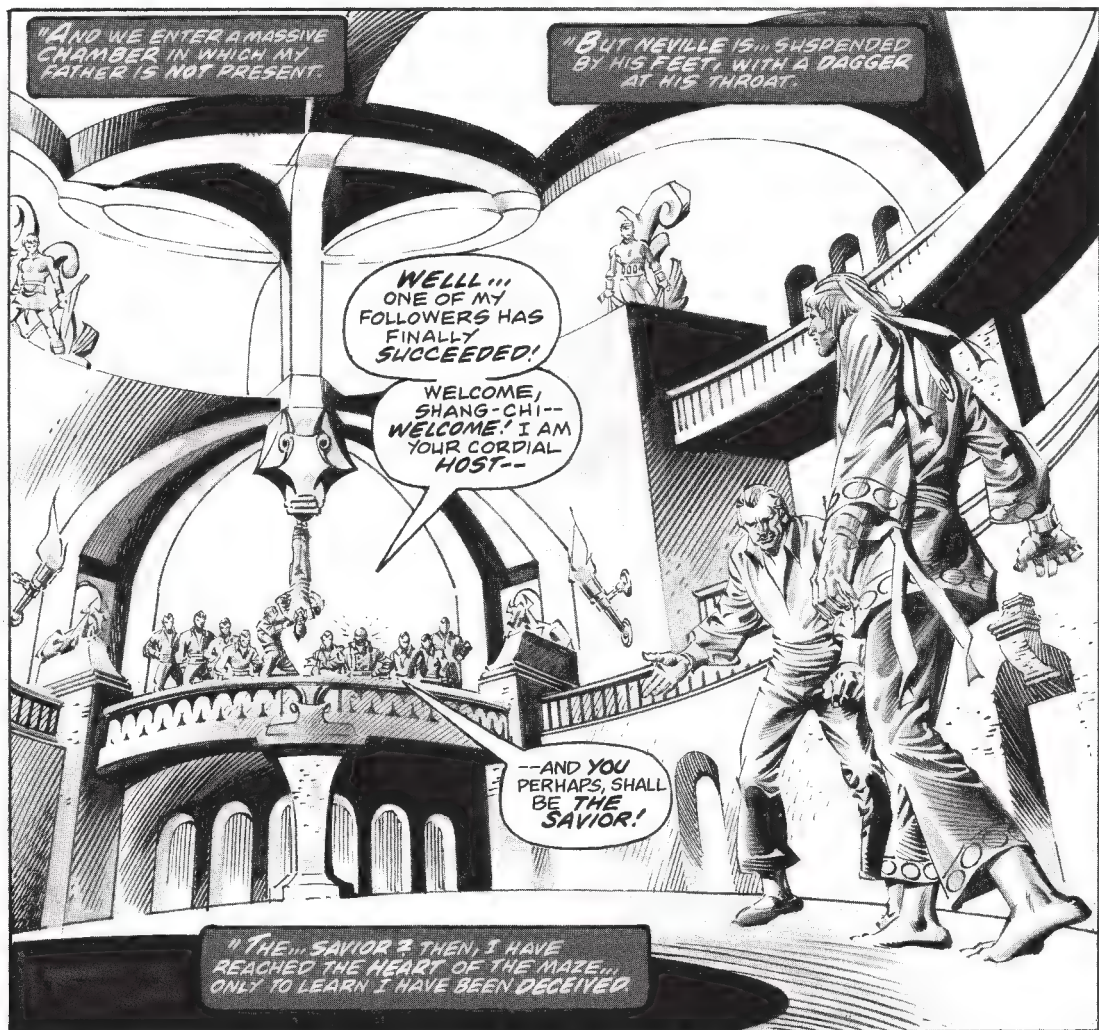
...AND REPLY
WITH ONE MORE
EFFECTIVE!

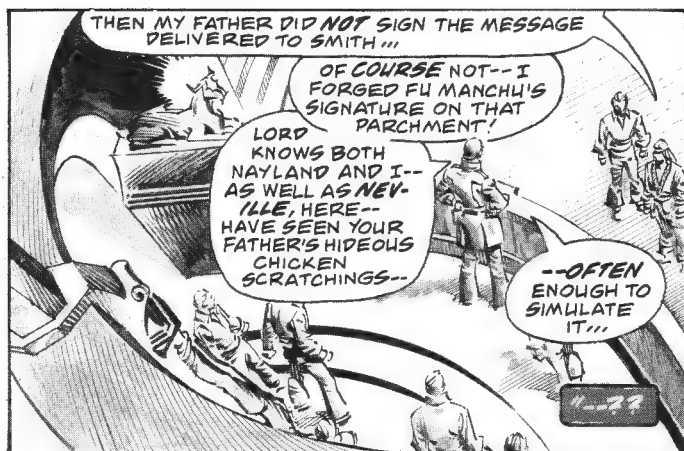




WHO IS BEHIND THIS MYSTERY? WHY HAVE THEY SET THIS TRAP WITH COLLEEN WING AS BAIT? WHAT DO THEY WANT FROM YOU--?







THEN MY FATHER DID NOT SIGN THE MESSAGE DELIVERED TO SMITH...

OF COURSE NOT-- I FORGED FU MANCHU'S SIGNATURE ON THAT PARCHMENT!

LORD KNOWS BOTH NAYLAND AND I-- AS WELL AS NEVILLE, HERE-- HAVE SEEN YOUR FATHER'S HIDEOUS CHICKEN SCRATCHINGS--

--OFTEN ENOUGH TO SIMULATE IT...



AH! YOU ARE SOMEWHAT NON-PLUSED... IT'S REALLY QUITE SIMPLE. NAYLAND AND I-- ALONG WITH PETRIE, NEVILLE, AND LATER TARR--

--HUNTED FU MANCHU FOR NIGH UNTO TEN YEARS.

INDEED, HOW DO YOU THINK I ACQUIRED THIS MAZE...? WE CHASED THE ORIENTAL FIEND RIGHT STRAIGHT OUT OF HERE BACK IN '47. HAH!



"I SUSPECT HE IS... MAD."

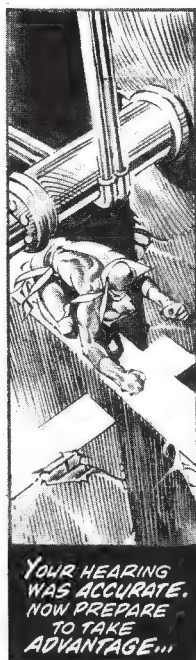
WHY HAVE YOU PLANTED THE BOMB-- AND ABDUCTED NEVILLE--?

WHAT DO YOU WANT OF ME?

THE ANSWERS TO YOUR MULTITUDINOUS QUESTIONS SHALL BE FORTHCOMING QUITE SOON, SHANG-CHI...

INDEED, JUST AS SOON AS WE ARE PRIVILEGED TO THE ARRIVAL OF--

--OUR OTHER GUEST!



YOUR HEARING WAS ACCURATE. NOW PREPARE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE...



...DROPPING DOWN ON THE ONE WHOSE BREATHING YOU HEARD BEYOND THE MAZE WALL...

ANSWERS-- I WANT ANSWERS!

AGHK... Y-YES... YES...



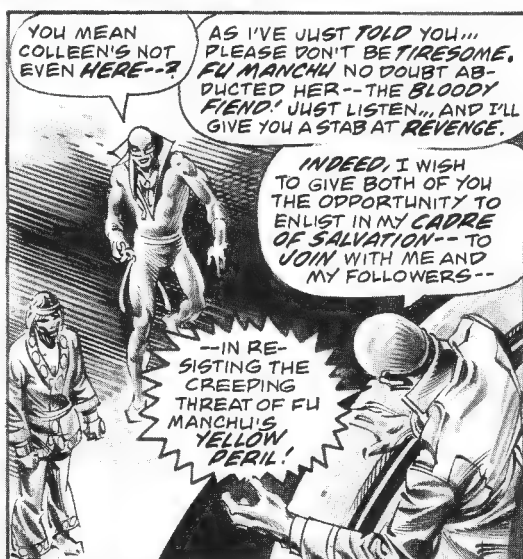
Y-YOU... SHALL HAVE... THEM!

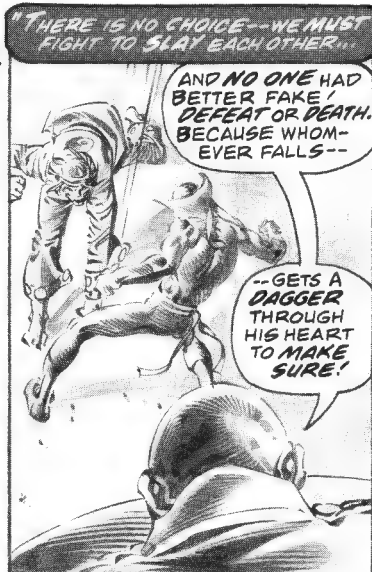
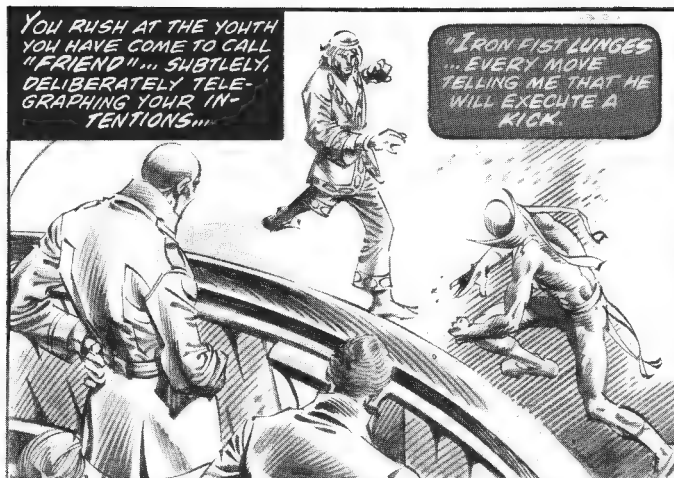
HIS FINGER TOUCHES A STUD YOU WONDER IF IT IS A TRICK-- ANOTHER FACET OF THIS TRAP...



...AND YOU DECIDE THAT IT MUST BE

BUT YOU ENTER IT ANYWAY-- ENTER IT TO FIND--





YOU KNOW YOU CAN NEVER
INVOKE THE SEETHING POWER
OF THE IRON FIST AGAINST
SHANG-CHI. AND YET, YOU
WONDER--

--IF YOU
MIGHT NEED
IT AGAINST
SUCH A
FOE.

HWAKT!

TIME TO CLEAR
OUT, LADS-- DOUBT
IF EVEN NEVILLE
COULD PULL THIS ONE
OUT OF THE FIRE
NOW...

TIK
TIK
TIK TIK

"THERE IS PAIN NOW, INCREASING WITH EACH
BLOW... BUT IT IS INSIGNIFICANT COMPARED WITH
THAT IRON FIST'S SUPERNATURAL POWER MIGHT
INDUCE

SHOKK!

FWUK

BWAK

TIK
TIK
TIK
TIK
TIK
TIK

CHUDK

FWAKT

IRON FIST!
YOU'RE NOT PUTTING
OUT ONE HUNDRED
PERCENT--



"WE LOOK FROM THE DESTRUCTION INTO EYES SUDDENLY SHARING A THOUGHT."



YOU ARE CERTAIN SHANG-CHI SENSES YOUR IDEA. IF ONLY HE WILL MANEUVER HIMSELF INTO THE PROPER POSITION...



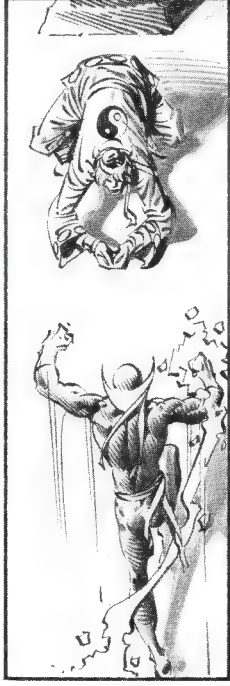
YES--HE HAS DONE IT. HE DEFINITELY UNDERSTANDS, AND YOU ARE CERTAIN THE PLOY WILL SUCCEED...

GO ON--KILL HIM--PUNCH HIM WITH YOUR FLAMING FIST--DO IT!!



WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR--?

YES, IRON FIST--DO IT!!! FOR I AM READY FOR YOU!!!



YES!

KOW!



SIR DENIS...
AM I **WRONG**...
OR DID
NOTHING
MUCH
HAPPEN--?

NO, BLACK
JACK...BUT
THE **BOMB**
SEEMS TO
HAVE BEEN
ALL **SMOKE**
AND **NOISE**!

OF
COURSE
IT DIDN'T
DO ANY
REAL
DAMAGE,
NAYLAND...

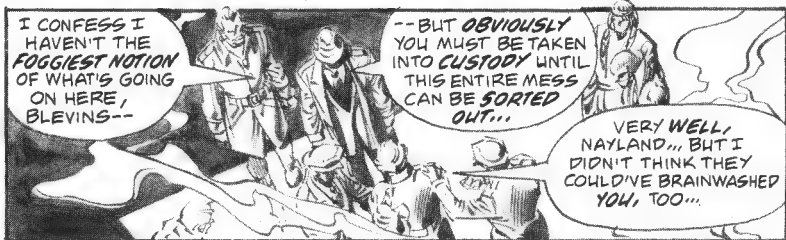


BLEVINS! WHAT
THE **BLOODY**
DEVIL--? HAVEN'T
SEEN YOU IN
YEARS, MAN--!

I'VE BEEN **PREPARING**, NAYLAND
--GATHERING MY **CADRE OF**
SALVATION! THE **BOMB** WAS
MERELY **BAIT**... A WAY TO EN-
LIST **SHANG-CHI** AND **IRON**
FIST AGAINST **FU MANCHU**.

I'M TRYING TO **PROTECT**
THE **GLORY** OF **ENGLAND**
FROM THAT **DEVIL'S**
PREYING **EVIL**.

DID YOU REALLY
THINK I'D **DESTROY**
ONE OF **ENGLAND'S**
MOST **SACRED**
INSTITUTIONS?



I CONFESS I
HAVEN'T THE
FOGGIEST NOTION
OF WHAT'S GOING
ON HERE,
BLEVINS--

--BUT **OBVIOUSLY**
YOU MUST BE TAKEN
INTO **CUSTODY** UNTIL
THIS ENTIRE MESS
CAN BE **SORTED**
OUT...

VERY WELL,
NAYLAND... BUT I
DIDN'T THINK THEY
COULD'VE BRAINWASHED
YOU, TOO...



"**SMITH'S OFFICE**--
AN HOUR LATER..."

--ROUND THE **BEND**, I
FEAR... **COMPLETELY!**
THAT'S QUITE SOME TALE
YOU TWO HAVE TOLD...

THE **SI-FAN**, **SMITH**--
WHY DID THEY **FOLLOW**
HIM, WHEN HE SO **OBVI-**
OUSLY HATED MY
FATHER?



THEY WEREN'T **TRUE** **SI-FAN**,
SHANG-CHI-- JUST **GREEDY**
MERCENARIES, WILLING TO
PLAY A ROLE IN **BLEVINS'** MAD
SCHEME OF FIGHTING **FU-**
MANCHU'S FIRE WITH FIRE OF
HIS OWN.

AND I THANK **BOTH**
OF YOU FOR **ROUNDING**
THEM UP. BUT BEFORE
YOU LEAVE, **SHANG-**
CHI... **IRON FIST**...

...TELL
ME SOME-
THING. DURING
THAT **FORCED**
FIGHT--



--WERE YOU TWO
ACTUALLY OUT FOR
BLOOD--? I MEAN,
WOULD YOU HAVE
REALLY **KILLED** EACH
OTHER, HAD IT COME
TO THAT...?

PERHAPS,
SMITH, THAT
IS AN ANSWER
WE DO NOT
KNOW...



...AND
PERHAPS IT
IS **BETTER**
THAT WAY.

AND SOLEMNLY, **IRON FIST**,
YOU AGREE WITH **SHANG-**
CHI ... WITH YOUR FRIEND.

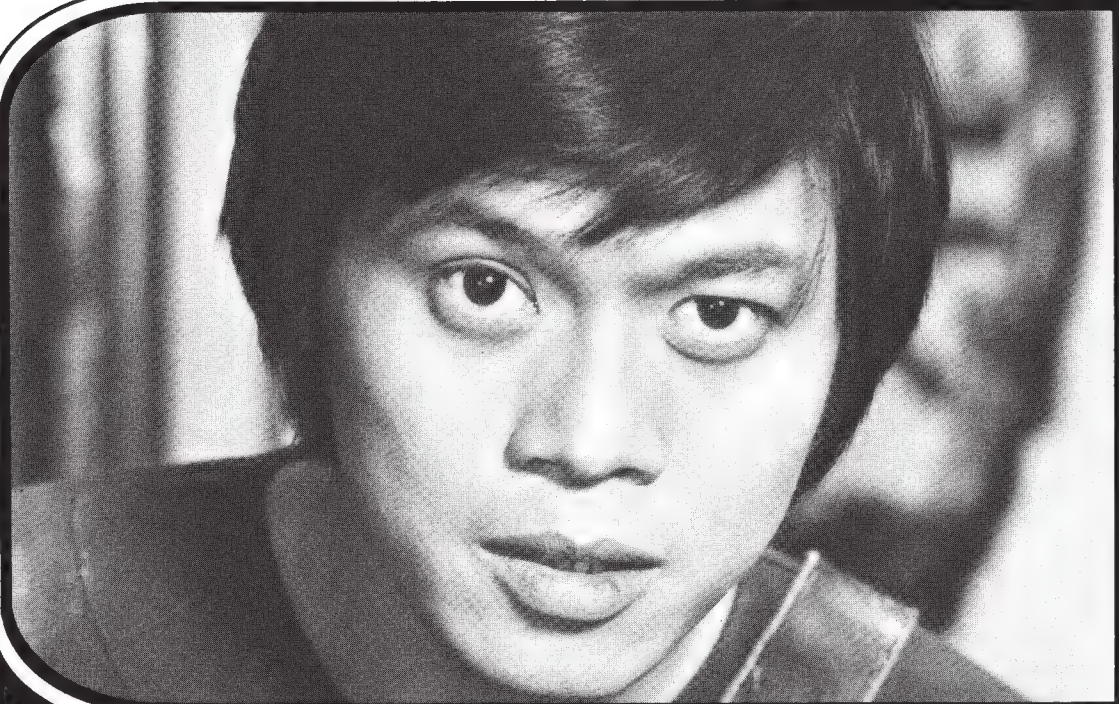
END



Laconic *Lee Van Cleef* prepares to receive the reward Actor's Equity Union deemed suitable for his outstanding performance in the starring role of *Dakota* in *STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER*.



Al Tung who has the role of *Wang* in *STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER* prepares to fasten magnifying piece to his eye in a vain attempt to seek out a favorable review of *STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER*.



Leo Lieh, whose first martial arts film *FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH*, broke box office records wherever it was played, essayed the co-starring role of *Ho* in *STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER* which broke audience laugh-track records during its initial run.

RIP OFF AT THE O.K. BOX OFFICE

by Don McGregor

THE *STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER* isn't about anything.

It goes about its task of nothingness in a pleasant enough fashion. The movie rips off (they probably call it homage) numerous stock situations and conversational by-plays from western and kung fu and samurai films and delivers them in an inoffensive and uninspired manner; but it never attempts to utilize any of the themes which have made legitimate features in these genres so striking and effective. During the unfolding of its mindless journey, it resurrects a bounty of posterior jokes as if it were a rich vein of humor they just can't get enough of, some of which aren't as inoffensive as most of the flat dialogue and stock situations.

It must have sounded great to the production companies

back in 1974 when the film was made. Run Run Shaw Ltd., and Columbia Pictures must have been presented with the idea at the height of the kung fu craze.

Someone, maybe it was Carlo Ponti, the producer of the film, or Barth Jules Sussman, the screenwriter (thought in fairness it seems as if this writing project were an assignment given to him and which he dutifully knocked out without any traumas), at any rate somebody got the bright idea to make a kung fu-western.

We'll get both the markets, right?

More likely, they could lose them both.

THE *STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER* could be worse; at moments it almost seems as if the people making the film were at least enjoying themselves, not often, but at



The villain of the piece, the mad evangelist deacon, played by actor Julian Ugarde spends most of the film with glazed looks on his face which the audience is supposed to accept as the result of madness.

times. Still, the movie lacks mythology. And it lacks heart, also.

It's a production piece, devoid of vision, and while some production pieces can be a divertissement, they seldom have the power or commercial possibilities of a movie (or book or play or comic book, etc.) that is singularly conceived. It is the personality imbued into the structure, the very fabric of the endeavor, be it movie, book, play or comic book, that makes it relate to an audience on an intellectual and emotional level.

How about that for a statement?

Without the singularity of a Bruce Lee, whose presence alters whichever film he is in, without the guiding force of an artist, even genre pieces lose an important fundamental. *THE STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER* is anemic in those important fundamentals. They might not build bodies 12 ways, these fundamentals, but they are at the basics of good story telling and communication.

Lee Van Cleef, straying from the Spaghetti Westerns, stars with Lo Lih, who was the hero in America's first enthusiastically received Kung Fu movie, *FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH*. The two of them are stuck with the concept that sounded so great on the drawing boards.

Neither of the men seem too thrilled by the concept. They seem to have taken scriptwriter Sussman's attitude: take the money and run.

Strangely enough, I saw *THE STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER* on a double bill, with a movie by Richard Brooks called *BITE THE BULLET*, and it beautifully illustrates the difference between a film crafted with vision and style and one that has a conglomerate identity. While Brooks uses little kung fu in this movie, and James Coburn does a better hand slap to the ears than Lo Lih, he does combine two popular entertainments, the western and the

classic racing contest. Racing horses gives you so much more open room to play with in a film than a contemporary race track, keeping *BULLET* from circular claustrophobia; and Brooks uses his western race as a metaphor for the human compulsion to win, focused specifically to its pertinence to the American attitude. He uses history to comment on the present, and to strike his point home. *BITE THE BULLET* and its director/writer Richard Brooks never forget what they are about. Each scene works toward complementing and amplifying the whole work, yet it does not sacrifice any of the elements that keep entertaining the audience. In fact, because each scene has a purpose, it works more effectively as a whole, with characters to which the audience can relate.

STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER remain terms, they are never fused into flesh and blood.

The film opens with a train pulling into what is supposed to be "Monterey, the richest little town south of San Francisco." We are immediately introduced to the gunfighter in the title, although no one makes that reference, or, for that matter, calls him by any other name for quite a spell in the film.

A man-with-no-name hold over from the Italian Westerns, presumably.

Let's ignore, for the moment, the larger questions of plot development, character interaction and thematic viewpoint or any other aesthetic question, and concentrate on this singular aspect of *STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER*. The Lee Van Cleef character is not the only person in the film who is committing mayhem or generally furtive deeds that is not formally introduced to the audience. Scriptwriter Sussman may have told the director and actors in the narrative part of his screenplay that Dakota (the character played by Van Cleef) disembarks from the train in a manner that suggests that he has not paid his passage, but when the film is in its visual state without that information, we have no idea who is doing what, or why, for the first ten minutes of the movie. If that omission was done for effect and

purpose, it would be excusable, or even if the Van Cleef character were the only example of that cardinal sin, but barely one half or more of the cast take on any identity the audience can relate to by name.

Even in a kung fu film it would be nice to know who is kicking out the other guy's guts, no matter how simplistic the motivation for such anti-social behavior.

Van Cleef appears out of the steam from the idling train, and is immediately sighted by a conductor who challenges him and says that Van Cleef isn't leaving the train yard without paying his fare. Belligerent chaps, these train conductors. Van Cleef informs the belligerent chap in a deadpan manner that he has other ideas, just as a burst of steam fills the air around the two men.

When the steam subsides, Van Cleef is gone!

It might have been a nice trick if it had been the Shadow of the old pulps, but our gunfighter of the title hardly has the charismatic power of that cloaked demon. The sequence also lacks the atmosphere that is conducive to such sleight-of-body magic.

The music changes in mood, and is one of the most effective elements of the film. The music creates the mood that is missing elsewhere.

At first, we have no idea where the scene has changed too, although we are aware that we are still with our unnamed gunfighter Van Cleef, who is skulking around in dark rooms that have no shadowy menace. The dark rooms merely look underlit. The dark rooms also seem to go on forever. So do the credits, which continually intercut with Van Cleef's movements.

Van Cleef extracts some instruments from a leather case. Obviously burglar tools. The credits tell us that the dialogue director is Paul Costello. It's apparent they didn't want to overwork the man.

Van Cleef sets to work on the safe, manages to get it open since that's what it indicates in the script must happen, and withdraws the contents of the safe. The contents are a photograph, in black-and-white, of a woman, also unnamed, who is slipping out of a dress and squeezed into a corset. Her backside is to the viewer, and while she suffers the indignation of a corset she doesn't bother with any underpants.

The camera concentrates on the young woman's backside and lo and behold it transforms into living color, in panavision no less. The girl moves from the position, clearly an uncomfortable one, in the picture and responds to a knock at the door. A short, fat, little man who the woman addresses as Wang (maybe they ought to forget about names) enters and tells her to keep her uncomfortable position while he whips out, no you didn't guess it, an eyeglass and studies her posterior. For posterity's sake, perhaps?

The girl has a tattoo on that portion of her anatomy, although the audience cannot see it. Wang asks her if it hurt and she says, "No. Hardly at all. You know I'd suffer anything for you." She pauses seductively, then adds, "Wang!"

Well, you get the implication.

Before Wang can prove his allure to the rest of us, the camera opts to close in on a Bible lying on a nearby table, and we are back with Van Cleef in that underlit room, wishing someone had remembered to bring the candles.

The credits flash in at us again, telling us that the film was co-produced by Gustave Aaron and Run Run Shaw, and that the entire project is a Spanish-Italian production.

One wonders which nationality Run Run Shaw and associates reflect.

Van Cleef is still at the vault, but opening another compartment with his ingenious tools. He withdraws the contents of this safe and finds another young lady caught in a still-life portrait. She has also forgotten to wear any undies, and, like her predecessor turns into moving colors. The woman, like everybody else save Wang, who is now in the bedroom with the young lady, takes out his eye-piece, fits it into his eye, and surveys his handiwork.

Wang bows out, and the frustrated girl, forgetting to cover herself resorts to a whiskey bottle. The whiskey bottle is her identification code to the audience. Why should she need a name, also.

Anthony Dawson's directorial credit switches us back to Van Cleef, who is still in that damned underlit room opening, take a guess, you guessed it, another vault. Lord knows where they all come from. And inside is a third picture. One receives the impression they are all rejects from a rear-end photo spread in *Penthouse*.

This time, the woman in the photograph is playing a mandolin, for want of something better to do with her time. Wang visits her and she complains that she is jealous because he has made the same tattoo on other women's backsides. Ah ha! Wang rlacates the lady by extravagantly spending a bit of time with her. The camera spins us back to Van Cleef after we have viewed the lady contentedly asleep while Wang uses his eyepiece on the lady's mandolin, mistaking it for that popular piece of her anatomy.

Van Cleef comes across a fourth compartment. Will this go on forever? With a resounding relief, the answer is no. The young lady in the fourth photograph is looking toward the bank and sees a light through the windows. That was damned careless Van Cleef. Wang happens to be passing by, and she informs him of the light and Wang loses his cool.

"That's where my safe is!" he exclaims, forgetting his fortune cookies and runs toward the establishment. He runs into the unlit room; Van Cleef has also forgotten to lock the doors behind him. Great safe-cracker he is. Wang demands to know what Van Cleef is up to and Van Cleef tells him to stay back to this device, which turns out to be of more sage content than those fortune cookie slogans he spouted. Wang rushes toward the safe, which, if anyone can count, has been blown four times, but this time it is literally blown apart, and the blast hurls Wang backward without even the aid of a trampoline.

Van Cleef leans over Wang and calls him by name, asking him what in hell all those pictures were about. At that moment, the sheriff steps into the room and says with sadistic delight, "Welcome to Monterey, the hanging town." He then asks what Van Cleef did with Wang's fortune. Unfortunately, Van Cleef doesn't know about any fortune. Wang's dead face transforms into the visage of a Buddha figure. The Buddha figure is in an opulent room, with hanging tapestries, life sized figurines that stand in judgement over real people.

"Wang Ho Chiang," a voice announces, and finally gives us a figure to associate with a name. "We are proud to accept you among us as a new teacher of the noble and sacred art of kung fu."

The figures are all in a prayerful attitude, including Ho, who is the Stranger of the title play. Lo Lih has a disarming, near likeable appearance about him. He does not have Bruce Lee's presence, nor is he ever likely to threaten, let's say, Marlon Brando in the acting department, but he is

most inoffensive. One wishes him well, like a stray dog who has fallen on bad times but is of a pleasant, if quiet, disposition.

The school is an opulent setting, with Pagodas and courtyards, that gives the sequence a surface measure of elegance.

A troop of horse soldiers draws up to the school. The soldiers are all robed, with embroidered serpents and other symbols inscribed on their fronts. A bit of convincing costuming. Samurais hang indolently at their hips and they march through the courtyards as if they own them.

"I am looking for Wang Ho Kiang," says the leader of the soldiers, giving us his name twice, for gosh sakes, "on orders of the Warlord."

Ho is stupid enough to be such a person, and is informed his uncle is dead and that the money that had been entrusted to him by the Warlord has disappeared. The Warlord wants to see Ho. Now! But Ho informs them that he won't leave until the sacred ceremony is over. Foolish idealist that Ho is he believes that will settle the matter, but the soldiers are hardly idealists and charge Ho for this impertinence. He throws them right back down the steps they have run up. The other soldiers, like all minions in kung fu films, take up the charge by drawing their samurais. The venerable ancient one of the school stops the ruckus before it can begin by telling Ho to obey.

Ho accompanies the soldiers, via horseback, to the Mandarin's quarters, and it is a picturesque countryside they ride through. Alejandro Ulloa's photography is adequate in capturing the splendid view of water and islands as they pass over a long bridge, and while the camera work is never amazingly sophisticated or complicated or subtle, it has a balanced view that is clear and focused.

In a film like this you can't ask for anything more than that.

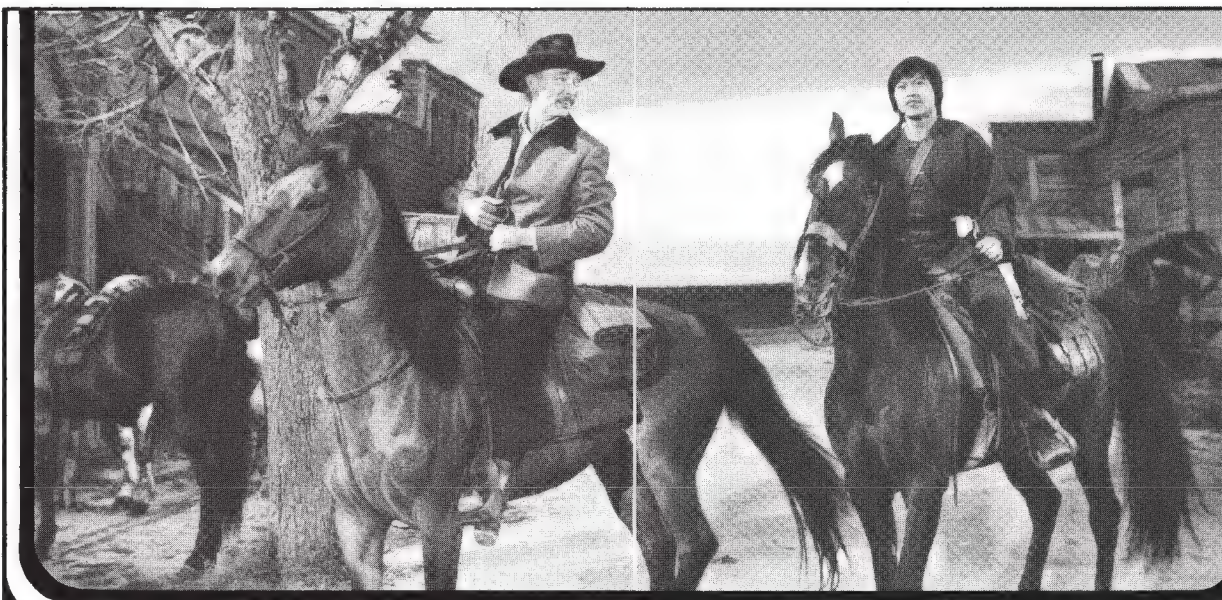
The music has a haunting vocalist reflecting the orchestration as they approach the Warlord's palatial estate.

The Warlord in *STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER* is a stern, plastic figure who thinks he's the Emperor Ming from Flash Gordon fame. Now we know who the soldier emulates. Ho's Uncle Wang took much of the Warlord's gold to the blessed land of America to invest it, and now that the man is dead, all of that wealth has disappeared. It makes sense to the Warlord, and maybe the soldiers, that they hold Ho's family to find out if they know what the uncle has done with all this loot on those distant foreign shores.

Ho's parents and sister are brought forth, and the Warlord tells the guards that the girl is theirs to do with as they will. One wonders if they will indulge themselves in tattooing her backside, since that seems to be a popular passtime; but Ho is convinced they have more devious designs than that in mind.

He leaps into action, backhanding the soldiers who approach his sister. When swords are drawn, he leaps directly at them and knocks those weapons from the hands which grasp them. Lo Lieh cannot move with the grace and power or rapidity that Bruce Lee can, and the choreography of the fight has a clumsy ineptitude about it that is often times laughable. It is never convincing.

The director, who opted for all those clear distant shots when showing the travelogue, handles much of the fight with close-ups, so that much of the action is vague. He goes into a series of roundhouse kicks, snapping his leg out with each spin and downing another soldier. The soldiers may not be idealists like Ho, but their trainers have taught them



The stars of our show, Lee Van Cleef (left) and Lo Lieh (right) share a private joke. (Note realistic stage set of western town indicative of lavish budget appropriations.)

to keep on yelling even after body after body falls to the earth beside them. The close shots cover for the stiffness of the stunt men, and the sound effects tell you that the men were hit. Praise be for the sound effects, because many of those kicks are clearly misses, and even close, quick cuts can't disguise that fact.

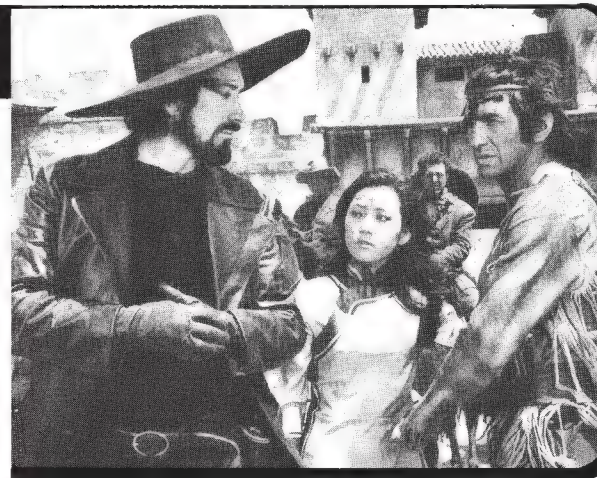
The Warlord calls a halt to the proceedings and everybody stops what they are doing. In the heat of battle it's doubtful that anyone, given that they were risen to such a bloodlust, would listen to edicts from on high, but even Ho stops spinning about like some whirling dervish trying to learn coordination.

The Warlord tells Ho that the only recompense he has received from Uncle Wang is a wooden figure. It is a wooden totem that the Warlord considers worthless, therefore he now decides the battle will continue, but this time he will set his finest soldiers against Ho. His finest are six men in robes and colorful embroidery who surround Ho. They approach him menacingly.

The six, samurai-armed specialists, little aware of their future counterparts, scream as one and charge. Ho, as calm as can be expected, waits for them. Ho flips the first two men over, turns to face them. He kicks one in the midsection, who crumbles to the dirt, and enacts a knee drop that, even to the untrained eye, hits the dirt and not the target. The villain groans as if he were really crushed.

The trampolines come into play as Ho leaps over the next pursuing swordsman, and the music track does "Pop Goes The Weasel" sound effects to accompany the phony trick. Ho hits one man who spits out what appears to be lukewarm tomato soup. It was probably cheaper than ketchup.

The Warlord realizes that his specialists have all bitten the dust, so to speak, and calls another halt to the proceedings. He tells Ho that he is brave and intelligent, observant commentary on his part, no wonder he's a Warlord. He tells Ho that he will give him one year's



From left to right, Julian Ugarte, the mad deacon; Karen Yeh as the crucially important Lia Hua, Chinese Mistress; and Goyo Peralta, playing the mercenary brawler Indio, making his screen debut. With a premiere like this, he may never be heard from again.

sojourn to America to clear his family's name and honor, only God and the scriptwriter know why, and Ho agrees, deciding, I guess, to be an idealist about the whole matter later.

Back in America, but actually Spain where the movie is filmed, Monterey is building a hanging scaffold to make Van Cleef pay for his sins. Ho arrives by stagecoach to this scene of activity. While Monterey is a hanging town it takes its own sweet time about it since we must assume that there are no transcontinental jets to transport Ho from the Orient.

Wang's lawyer tells Ho that his uncle had no fortune but left the four photographs we saw earlier. The lawyer suggests that the robber caught at the scene of his uncle's death might have some idea where the fortune has gone, and Ho decides to make the man's acquaintance.

The only girl who gets a name is Lia Hua, the Oriental girl who informed Ho that there was a light on in the bank.

Ho walks to the local saloon where a sign is posted that says "No Negroes, No Chinese or Unaccompanied Dogs Allowed." Ho finds himself a dog and enters the establishment. When the bartender reads the sign to Ho, Ho informs him that the dog is accompanied. The bartender calls for two gunmen called Gringo and Deadeye to back up his statement. They approach Ho from behind, and he backhands the two men without turning toward them. They obediently fall to the floor and Ho turns, using his regretful look and asks for their pardon.

They place a trampoline in the bar, employ the "Pop Goes The Weasel" sound effect, and Ho jumps over the two men, disarming them as he passes. He lands on the other side of the two men, holding onto their sidearms.

The bartender, without a second thought, reaches for the shotgun hidden beneath the bar, but Ho vaults over it, and kicks it out of his hands. Landing, Ho elbows the bartender who goes crashing into the tables.

The sheriff enters on cue, asking what the hell is going on in the bar. "You don't want me to arrest you?" he growls.

Ho is humble. "Oh, yes, I do, Sir," he says in his most humble manner.

When it appears that the sheriff is not going to arrest him, Ho nods.

And then kicks the sheriff in the face!

The stunt is the most effective piece of action in the film thus far, calculating its delivery and completing it with unexpected timing. The idea of the hero calmly setting up the antagonist is an old ploy, perhaps best employed in George Stevens' *SHANE*, when Alan Ladd gains his vengeance on Ben Johnson; but this time *STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER* has been more successful in its mimicry.

* * *

Ho, the Stranger, finally meets Van Cleef, still unnamed, the Gunfighter. They share adjoining cells and Ho strikes up an acquaintance, learning in the process that Van Cleef does not know anything about the pictures and that he did not intend to kill Wang.

The lawyer had given Ho a fortune cookie with the four pictures, and Ho decides to open it, reading the cryptic inscription to Van Cleef.

"It say: 'At bottom of every woman is fortune.'" quotes Ho.

His uncle was a clever man. Only God and the scriptwriters know how Wang expected anyone to interpret that clever line and maybe even they don't know.

After a series of one-liners about bottoms, the sheriff opens the cell to tell Ho that the lawyer has paid his fine.

The next day, Ho saves Van Cleef from hanging. Ho has hidden beneath the scaffolding and when Van Cleef drops through, he cuts the rope, obviously having caught a sneak preview of *CAT BALLOU* where Jane Fonda is similarly rescued, and he and Van Cleef race out of town. Van Cleef, to demonstrate, finally, that he is an expert gunman, shoots down the banners that proclaim his hanging to the vulturous audience. The posse's horses all tumble head over heels at the piece of cloth, and the music goes crazy with a catchy little tune that seems reminiscent from some other movie, maybe Lalo Schiffrin's score for *ENTER THE DRAGON*.

Ho and Van Cleef set up camp on a riverside, and Van Cleef finally has a chance to announce his identity. "Name's Dakota. Thief by profession, bum by choice." Obviously they don't want to overwork the dialogue

director, and why start now just because this is the first dialogue scene.

When Dakota inquires as to why Ho saved his life, Ho replies that he needs a guide to help him on his quest (he doesn't use such a fanciful term) through America. If Dakota refuses to help him, he will be obliged to kill him. To demonstrate his point, Ho lets Dakota reach for his holstered gun and throws a shuriken dart which hits inside the trigger guard. Ho then tells him, after Dakota is suitably impressed, that what he desires to do is find his uncle's four mistresses. Ho tells Dakota that the first lady is American that they will search for, and that she is with Yancy Hobart. Now how he found all that out is questionable, but even more questionable is that Dakota immediately knows who this Yancy Hobart is. Hobart was thrown out of the army for what amounts to a violent disposition, something it seems they would have tried to channel, and since the Civil War, has taken up preaching. Dakota, praise be, even knows where the righteous little devil is. Dusty City.

That serves as an introduction to Windy City and Yancy Hobart. He is dressed in a long black leather coat and huge, wide brimmed black hat, and looks like an awe inspiring undertaker. Immediately, the Preacher man reveals, with a malevolent glint in his eyes, that he's a psychotic no-goodnik. He enters the local gambling casino and starts blasting the joint apart between sermons of hell and damnation. The owner of the casino, another unnamed participant in the shenanigans, is displeased when he guns down on the casino enforcers. Having made his point, whatever it was, Yancy leaves and Ho and Dakota watch him depart.

"What'd I tell ya?" asks Dakota. "Sociable fella."

The Deacon walks to his portable church, a wooden wagon on wheels that is a reject from a medicine man's used wagon lot. Ho convinces Dakota that they should invade the Deacon's sanctuary and interrupt the good preacher just as he is about to "purify" the young American lady that Ho has been searching for. While Deacon spouts Bible quotations, Dakota holds a gun to his head and Ho indulges in his uncle's fetish of gazing at the lady's backside. None of these ladies seem to wear underpants, a curious phenomenon for the 1860's it would seem, but though this lady fails to wear undies she does have a chastity belt locked about her. Good thing Old Dakota, the lock picker, is with Ho. He makes quick work of the belt, and our nameless American girl bemoans the fate of another "freak" wanting to gaze at her tattoo.

After Ho has had his peek through the eyeglass, the two men leave, intending to find "the other asses" for the complete message.

How about that? Isn't that cute?

Ho tells them that their next lady is in New Mexico. While they depart, Hobart turns his attention to the young lady inside the portable church house, and peruses her tattoo. Immediately, he deduces that the tattoo is the key to Wang's treasure which everyone has been talking about, and that if he can get to the treasure before Dakota and Ho he can build himself a church. All this is recounted with his maniacal gleam firmly in place.

The maniacal gleam is replaced by an outside boxing ring where a scrawny huckster gives suckers a chance to win a hundred dollars by stepping into the beforementioned ring with his fighter. An unnamed fella who appears to be a Spanish-Italian concept of an Indian enters the ring, pays his five dollars for the privilege of either getting his teeth knocked out or the chance of winning the cash prize. He

promptly earns his cash prize by performing some crude karate knowledge, and being able to withstand any punishment the other nondescript boxer cares to dish out. The scrawny huckster weakly urges his boxer to try his best, but he hasn't learned the art of mass-sell that those slick Madison Avenue boys have down pat.

The aggressor rips one of the posts out of the ringside when it looks as if he might not get paid and begins to take on the spectators until the Deacon arrives. The Deacon tells the man that he can earn much more money than this prize cash, and the fighter nods his assent dumbly, and takes off with the Reverend.

Meantime, while the dastardly duo do dastardly things, we rejoin Ho and Dakota. They are in a gambling casino that is supposed to be in New Mexico, but it looks suspiciously like the casino the Deacon shot up in his entrance. Probably making do with the same set twice. Saves on the expense, you know.

"Now we gotta find another ass," Dakota says, and Van Cleef does his constipated narrowed eyes squint, looks about the plush surroundings and says, "That's why we're here?"

It is indeed.

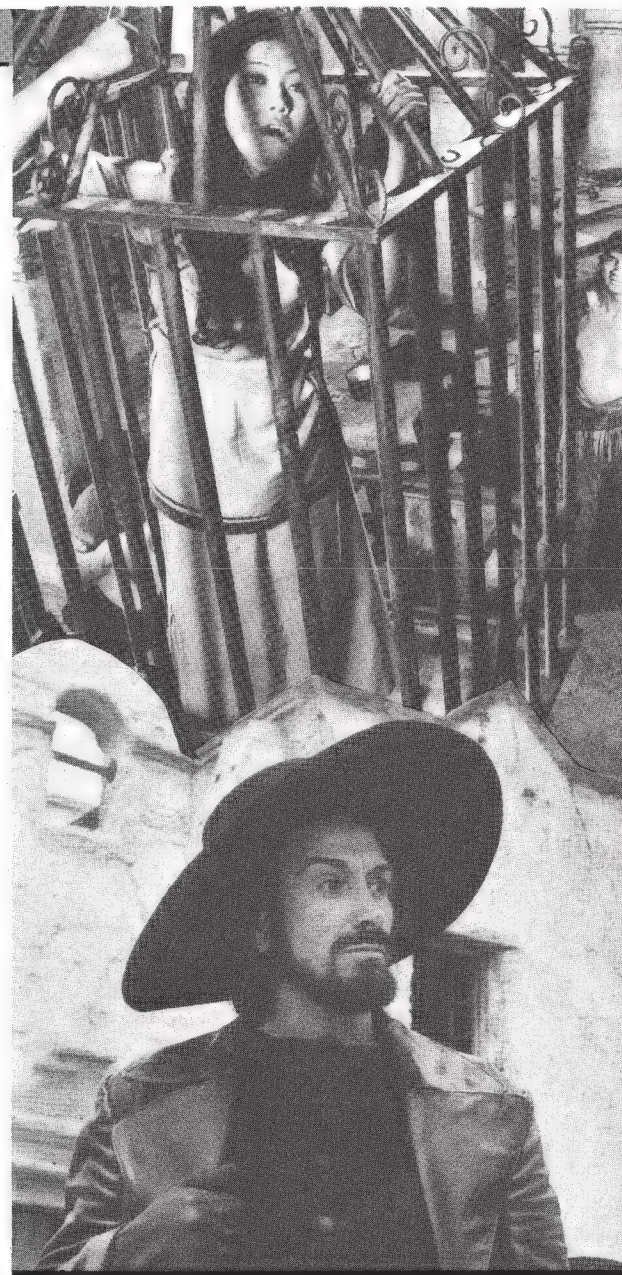
The wife of the owner of this den of iniquity is the uncle's second mistress. Dakota is approached by one of the dance hall girls, but puts her off and follows Ho to the gambling tables. Upstairs, the beforementioned owner and his wife discuss her sister. Their tete-a-tete is interrupted by one of the house gamblers who says a man is breaking the bank. The men in question are, you guessed it, Ho and Dakota. Dakota is winning heavily, with Ho's Oriental mathematical magic, even defying the odds when the operators cheats on the spinning wheel. Ho can even calculate that. The music gives us an ominous Captain Midnight stroke each time the ball bounces into a slot.

The owner, unnamed like everybody else, and perhaps fortunate to be so blessed, invites Dakota and Ho to discuss their winnings in private. The private room is a combination kitchen and still where the casino manufactures its own booze.

It is a trap!

They are surrounded by dozens of bouncers and bakers, and, mayhaps, even candlestick makers. Ho does his trampoline schtick, bouncing into a somersault which kicks out two of the men. He then somersaults over the head of another approaching antagonist, and we hear the "Pop! Goes The Weasel" sound effect, which they seem to love near as much as their endless "adult" posterior jokes, and lands behind the man and kicks him. Now Ho starts wading knee deep through attackers, with fists of fury and feet of dynamite and toes of silly putty. Lee Van Cleef watches all this with supposedly amused tolerance, and no one bothers him; they'd all rather get their heads bashed in by Ho, who doesn't even sweat under his armpits during all this exercise. Adding a little variety to his act, Ho jumps over another man, but this time lands on top of his head. Sometime Richard Lester ought to make a kung fu movie, he could have a rousing good time with such fight scenes, but amidst his hilarity that would be an underscoring of reality. Violence that leaves a sour taste on the back of your tongue once the laughter has stopped.

Ho knocks one of the men into a steaming vat, then turns to face a man who wields a huge axe, and as the man rushes past him, chops down on the back of the man's neck. One of the cooks, deciding to side with Ho for some inexplicable reason, slams a heavy frying pan into the man's face. Loony



The villainous deacon has the upper-hand in this encounter with Dakota whose physical agonies barely approximate the mental discomfort being experienced by what's left of the audience.

Tunes violence. If it works well for the Road Runner and Wily Coyote, it ought to work well for humans.

Another theory shot to hell.

Ho takes out four men at a time until someone decides to get wise and draw a gun. Ho kicks it aside while Van Cleef bides his time. Ho slams the palms of his hands into men's ears, slashes at faces, and the music stops, as if even they've lost count at the fallen bodies who never seem to get in the way.

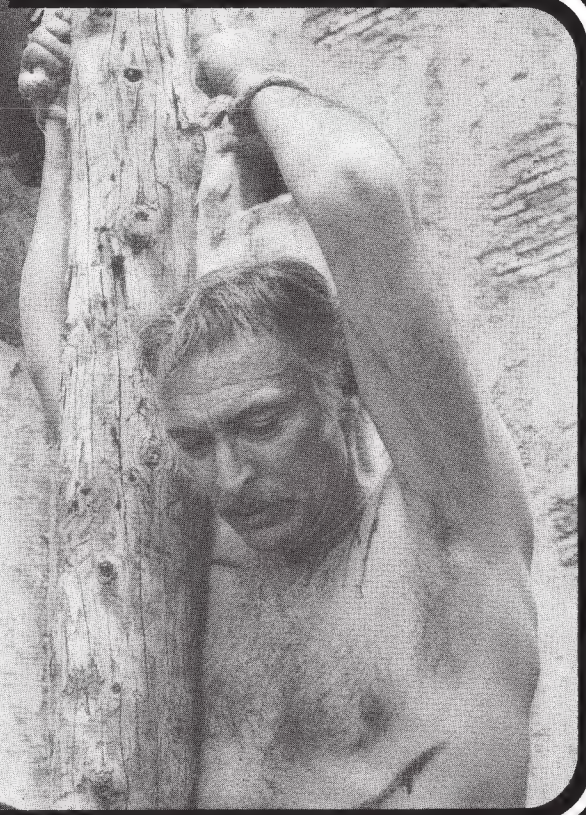
One of the gamblers decides to enter the fray and Van Cleef gets his chance to ram someone's head into a barrel. Why what that one man might have done to Ho against all those professionals if Dakota hadn't been there to save him.

He also uses his guns to shoot holes into the steaming vats to give other attackers a hot shower.

Ho bows to Dakota.

For the clincher, another man throws himself mindlessly at Ho (minions are always mindless, don't you know), and this mindless entity has a huge carving knife. Ho kicks him square in the groin. He kicks so hard that, as the man squeals, he sails into the air, right up to the roof where the blade of the knife entrenches itself. The man hangs there,

Karen Yeh as *Lia Hua* is seen in her dramatic moment of torment at the hands of the deacon and his men, as they calmly await the revelation of her dark secret; which is more than can be said for most members of the audience who've left the theater long before.



swinging by the knife and wails pitifully.

Ho pays his respects to other mindless minions in typical fashion until the man hanging from the ceiling falls. He gets a kick in the head for his troubles, but only to put him out of his dumb misery.

Now another mindless idiot picks up the knife, not having learned anything from what has gone before, and Dakota shoots it out of his hand.

All goes quiet.

The casino owner is apologetic, as well he might, and offers to take them to his office, even if he doesn't have a name. Dakota drops one of the guns he has picked up into the bubbling still, and it clanks, shudders, and blows



Lia Hua, whose phony trampoline antics made him come off more as a Mexican jumping bean than a Chinese martial artist, is seen here drop-kicking a mannequin disguised as an opponent.

alcohol throughout the room. It's not a spectacular explosion, it's more like a cute explosion. Chuckle, chuckle.

In the office, Ho tells the owner he doesn't want the money. Dakota interjects, "Now just a minute, he doesn't speak English very well."

"Let's get to the bottom of all this," offers the owner, setting up another posterior quip from Ho. "Yes, I want bottom." The wife is outraged, especially when the owner/husband says it's just a bottom like all the other bottoms. Ho gets his way, only to learn, horror of all plot twist horrors, that it is the wrong bottom. This may go on forever, but now we learn it is her sister's derriere that has in the infamous tattoo, and she is the dance hall girl that Dakota turned down. Talk about irony.

The sister has a meek looking "trick" with her whom Ho dispatches mercifully. When Dakota tells her what Ho wants to see, she is pleased that someone has begun to appreciate what she calls "her national monument." Her national monument has a variety of penned autographs that never wash off, but Ho finds the mark he is looking for and he and Dakota depart.

No sooner have they gone than the Deacon shows up with his sidekick, threatens the owner, and goes in search of the girl. She is soothing her head-sore Mr. Peepers type who takes it on the noggin again when Deacon enters.

* * *

Posing as a doctor, Ho and Dakota gain entrance to the special three car train owned by a very refined En-

glishman, whose wife is also the third mistress. How Ho finds these guys and their mates is obscured in the tea leaves, but this wife is ill, and Ho practices acupuncture on her cheeks, using this ploy to gain sight of the precious tattoo.

The train then takes off through some scenic route, only to be stopped by the Indian and Deacon. Deacon is less subtle about his inquiry and overpowers the husband, pulls up the lady's dress, and growls to his companion that they are always second.

"We must get to the Chinese girl before them, and take her with us," and his voice has a fanatical gleam. "She's the only one who can translate these markings."

Now how does the Deacon know all of this? Divine intervention? A direct communicate with the Head Man? Such inconsistencies and loopholes would not be so obvious if the film were not performed on the basest of levels, but even at that level they have been slipshod in construction.

* * *

While Dakota indulges himself with wine, women, and song in the next town's saloon, Ho visits the Chinese girl and her father and has a quiet dinner with them. Her name is Lia Hua, and since she is Chinese and has a name Ho treats her with human dignity, playing the part perfectly that his white brothers have known so well throughout history, why even past the 1860's, believe it or not.

Lia is innocent and truly pure and sensitive, and, by golly, not only that, but beautiful.

Now that's a winning combination.

Both Lia Hua and Ho are smitten by the love bug, which brings a sudden chaste attack over Ho who can't very well ask her to raise her dress to learn whether or not she wears underpants. Ho retires from the dinner, telling Hua he wants to see her again and that it is very important.

The music is romantic for them as they whisper their tender farewells but never kiss.

When Ho joins Dakota, who is posterior deep in celebration, he tells him he hasn't seen Lia Hua's tattoo. "It's not easy to ask," he explains by way of obscure explanation.

The Dean shows up in town with an entire gang. That man snaps his fingers and they come a running. Horses come shattering through the windows into the casino. Ho leaps through the air and takes the rider off the horse in a clean movement.

Dakota dashes outside to see the Chinese Laundry store owned by Lia Hua's father in flames. The Deacon and the Indian, despicable cads, have grabbed Lia Hua and are abducting her. Ho crashes through the window, one that wasn't done to smithereens by the horses, and throws a knife into one of the minions as he rides by. Why is it they never go after the leaders in these kind of movies? They take out the underlings endlessly and never attempt for the guys who have instigated the whole shindig. Ho dashes to the burning store while Dakota fires at the departing riders.

Ho finds Lia's father mortally wounded, but in dying last breath tradition he reflects no concern about his imminent death, scarcely acknowledges that his life-blood is leaking out into the dirt. He tells Ho that the band make their hide-out in an old abandoned mission house. He must read

the tea leaves also.

Ho promises the dying man they will save Lia.

* * *

The skyline has a bleached-out look as the Deacon and his members ride toward the mission. They have left men to guard the approach to their hideout, but haven't yet taken the opportunity to view Lia's tattoo. It seems she has to verbally interpret the tattoos for the Dean. A new wrinkle in the scheme of things.

The mission is a good locale, offering interesting visual possibilities for the climactic confrontation, but it comes from a tedious beginning infiltrated with a few smiles and fair stunts. There is no tension to the coming conflict, and the villains, beyond the Deacon, are virtually nameless and indistinguishable in villainous proportions. One can determine, let's say, Goldfinger from Odd-Job in *GOLDFINGER*, or, to take a western, Jack Palance from Ben Johnson in *SHANE*. Here, the lack of identities coupled with a rambling, unstructured continuity leave the obligatory final massacre without any more purpose than that.

Back away, I mentioned Richard Brooks' *BITE THE BULLET*. Brooks builds to his eventual climax, and save for one left field coincidence, handles it with expertise. He handles a dozen characters and their interactions with skill, compassion, wit and verve, and the outcome to that film has the audience in hungry anticipation. The action is logically constructed into the framework of the film, an extension of the circumstances and personalities involved.

None of this interferes with the entertainment factor. It strengthens it, embellishes it, and gives it individuality of expression. To be about something, by the way, does not imply that the discussed work must have a message, but that it has a singular vision and presence. It might be a vision or presence with which you disagree but you shouldn't fear it. Your innate right is to disagree with the vision or personality, but not in refusing to acknowledge its existence utilizing the ostrich principle.

The people in *STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER* haven't invested much of anything into their product, except trying to anticipate how cheaply they can imitate chosen winners, and thereby become a winner themselves.

They haven't got much to lose if the toss of the dice comes up craps.

As the conclusion to *STRANGER* nears and Ho opts to invade the fortress by his lonesome, everyone seems tired and washed out. The end of the road is near. Let's make the journey as quickly as possible and get it over with.

Dakota, angry with Ho for trying to go in alone, does the same thing himself and is captured by the men who are guarding the mission. The lead man snaps a whip about Dakota's neck, and snarls at him that he will pay for killing the men during the raid to get Lia.

Inside the mission, Dakota is tied and whipped and asked about Ho. Dakota remains a smart mouth, uttering, "Go to hell!" to his tormentors while Ho scales the mission walls and drops unnoticed within the fortress.

Sancho places Dakota in a cellar room to reflect on his querrulous manner and the punishment he has received from the whip.

Ho takes cover as a guard approaches him. The man stops and puts a cigarette between his lips. Ho reaches around the wall separating them and lights it for him. The man nods, instinctively; Ho watches him react to this mysterious arm, and then kicks around the wall and makes the man wish that cigarette smoking was the only thing hazardous to his health.

Dakota picks the lock of his cell with the greatest of ease, but discovers a shadow descending the stairs, threatening disclosure of his escape. The music becomes perilous. Dakota waits, putting on a tensed appearance. The music continues to quaver. The shadow draws closer and Dakota leaps out, ready to strike, and backs off quick when he realizes it is Ho.

Dakota isn't any mindless minion, that's for sure. He's seen what those hands can do and he isn't having any part of that.

Before they can trade many pleasantries, Sancho comes down the stairs. This time when he snaps his whip toward Dakota, it fails to find its mark. Dakota grabs it, presumably tearing the flesh off the palms of his hands, but what does he need that for, and yanks Sancho off balance. He hauls off in unmartial like fashion and delivers a long roundhouse right and several other fisticuffs to Sancho before the man goes down.

"Damn! I was just getting warmed up," Dakota says, handing Sancho's gun to Ho. But Ho refuses to take it, claiming that he doesn't like weapons. He blissfully ignores the shuriken darts he has used earlier, which are certainly a part of martial arts weaponry, and besides, old Ho knows that none of the mindless minions will get around to thinking that they should stand from a distance, cock the hammer, pull the trigger, and mat his dark hair across the mission walls.

Ho takes to the rooftops, while Dakota embarks on some mysterious mission that will allow Ho to enter the quarters unnoticed where the Deacon holds Lia Hua prisoner.

Lia is a bird in a metal cage hanging from the ceiling of a large room. The wind blows hollowly beyond the walls, the way they do in nearly all Italian based American Westerns. It is an artificial sound that the filmmakers must find endearing, but it has a studio manufactured quality that is seldom convincing. Even the landscapes about the mission seem alien.

Marvel artist Craig Russell, who loves to draw rocks, would probably immediately discern the reason. Spain's countryside is covered with a flinty, colorless type rock, like broken shingles scattered across a broken rooftop, which the locales in which the movie's are supposedly taking place are large structures, solid and massive.

"Make her dance like a bear in a circus," the Deacon says imaginatively when Lia refuses to interpret the tattoos that he has been looking at. If Lia has all this information why were the other girls needed at all? To fill out to two hours running time of the movie? Aw shucks, that couldn't be it.

They place their portable barbecue pit, progressively desperadoes these, under Lia's cage. It's an ancient tradition, not totally honorable, to torture the imprisoned wench, while she moans in appealing suffering that is calculated to turn the audience on, purportedly the male persuasion of the audience.

Ho waits with shuriken dart in hand, forgetting what he has told Dakota disdainfully about killing men without using your bare hands, which is about what it comes down to when you analyze his statement.

Inside, the revelry and suspense continue.

The Deacon, who must intuitively know or also have access to the tea leaves, tells Lia that they will capture Ho if she does not reveal all that she knows, and infers they will do unkind deeds to Ho, also.

The wind blows. Distant horses whinney. Dakota, steely eyed thinker that he is, returns to the cellar where he has

spotted a gatling gun. Ho crawls along the parapets of the mission toward where they have Lia held. A guard passes, and Ho charges at him off the steps leading down the walls. He snaps a hand into the man's face, and, as the man reacts, kicks him in the back of the neck. The guard staggers down the steps into the view of other guards who appear to believe the guard is drunk. They find that fact hilarious while Ho enters a window.

Dakota, meantime, sets up the gatling gun between two horses who have been wagon-rigged.

Lia squirms in her cell as the floor bottom heats up, and Deacon squirms with delight, wishing he had a moustache to stroke.

Dakota spurs his team through the mission, running along with the horses and letting loose with the gatling gun. The mindless minions fall like mindless minions who will get up as soon as he has run past so that they can go fight with Ho. Saves on the budget, don't you know.

The bullets also slam through the adobe walls, hitting one man in the head. They use a clumsy spurting blood effect without impact, the way, let's say, that the violence in TAXI DRIVER, as fictional in its own right through selective, larger than life graphic closeups and unrealistic reactions to what happens when you are shot anywhere with a .44 Magnum (you do not pose with your fingers torn off, for example, you fall no matter where you are hit, and the force of the bullet normally puts your body into a state of shock that might even kill you). This man spits blood in a tidy stream, like spitting chewing tobacco, only in a less messy fashion. The bullets don't hit Lia. Wouldn't that have interjected a harsh note into the grimy proceedings? They decimate an awful lot of other people standing around in that large room.

Ho breaks the lock on Lia's cage with a metal bar while the Deacon and his men react to all the slaughter going on outside. Bullets fly in wholesale thousands, outside and inside, especially The Deacon and His Perverts discover Ho rescuing Lia and play six-gun symphonies.

Dakota lies down on the rigging, taking it easy while he fires the gatling gun. He crashes into a doorway, rolls off, and draws his handguns, playing his own symphony.

The music strikes a discordant, alarming piano note as the Deacon and Dakota meet inside the room. Hands hover over holsters. The piano ominously quotes the action. Since Dakota already has his gun drawn, one wonders if they haven't started sniffing the tea leaves or something, but the Deacon's Indian pal, the brute ring fighter, spots a tomahawk on the wall, while the tension builds to unbearable heights.

Kind of.

Deacon drops his gun, decides to spout quotations instead. His Indian pal grasps the tomahawk but Ho intervenes, telling Dakota, "Leave him to me."

Ho has taken out hundreds of guys in the previous fights, but for some reason he has trouble with the brute and his tomahawk.

Everybody watches as the two men square off against each other, separated by a large wooden post which has been put there so that Ho can scream and cut it spectacularly in half, in slow motion to boot. He kicks, backhands, and does other nasty things to the brute until the guy retaliates by leaping on top of him.

The brute gets his second wind and whips up on poor defenseless Ho who takes it on the chin, stomach, and every place else. He's forgotten everything he knew, lost his trampoline, no doubt.



Lo Lich is attempting to laugh his opponent to death with this aerial maneuver taken from the goony bird style of kung fu

Ho makes a comeback, true hero style!

Reaching the adobe wall on the rebound from a punch, he kicks off the wall, flips over, and slams his feet into the Brute's face. The stunt isn't actually shown. It is implied.

Now, Ho backs away from his opponent, in fact he leaps upward near twelve feet, up onto the stairs leading down the adobe wall. The stunt looks exactly as what it is. The actor actually leaped off the stairs and then the film was run in reverse. Faking it again, hardly trying to conceal it. Now that gives Ho a chance to jump over the brute's head again. So that's why he jumped up there. But as the brute challenges him again, Ho does his famous reverse jump and lands higher up on the wall.

The two men grapple once the brute gets to Ho, and he forces Ho over the side of the wall. Ho kicks him in the groin, but the brute must be a eunuch or something since he hardly feels it. You'd feel it, Friend, male, female, or otherwise. He also claps the man's ears viciously while he grunts and groans, delivers several back kicks that knock the brute off the wall.

The brute is kicked in the stomach, as the film goes slow motion and the music goes cliché'd psychotic. He falls to his death!

His chest is ripped open from the kick.

What this says is: Don't get Ho mad or he'll kick a hole clean through you.

Deacon, seeing that Dakota is watching Ho, tries for his gun. Dakota, without looking, shoots him.

Five times.

Remember this is the climactic fight, the head bad guys getting it.

* * *

Back in the Warlord's palace, Ho reveals that the uncle hid the treasure in the totem, a horde of valuable American business stocks. Now why Wang didn't tell the Warlord that when he sent the totem is a question that can only be

answered by the tea leaves and they've gone on vacation with the dialogue coach.

Dakota arrives, dressed in Oriental attire, and being hand carried. He shoots off the lock on the case hidden inside the totem and says he always arrives on time. Boy, they'd both better hope the Warlord doesn't learn they gave up a hundred thousand dollars back at that casino or they'll wish they hadn't shown up at all.

The Warlord lets Ho's family go, and the music gets Western-Chinese happy as they leave, Ho and Lia holding each other's hands.

They all seem to be in a hurry to get away.

* * *

The STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER need a presence. A Marlon Brando and Jack Nicholson and Arthur Penn can transcend a bad script like THE MISSOURI BREAKS. A Richard Brooks can make your blood race, startle your senses, and walk quietly away. The Marx Brothers can render a zany comprehension of the absurd. A W. C. Fields can comment on human foibles with cynical persuasion. A Bruce Lee can take the gamble, stand for his vision and try to get it through the factory-system that stifles creativity.

Sometimes they make it. If the audience backs them financially, they receive the opportunity to try it again. To take that creative gamble once anew.

Often-times they don't, or they are cut in their prime, and the vision is halted.

The next time Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman goes to the movie theater for an alibi, with her luck they'll probably have THE STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER on the bill.

And without a second feature of the quality of BITE THE BULLET.

It's enough to make you put a knot in your gi.



FIGHTING ARTS REVIEW

W
\$1.50 78-164 WARNER BOOKS

Zen Karate

BY HANNAH BROSSE

illustrations
to explain
techniques.

This month, as promised, I am devoting my energies exclusively to a survey of the current crop of kung fu paperbacks. The field, which flourished with the instant energy of an overnight mining town, has dwindled just as predictably with the inevitable fading of the martial arts fad. Still, there are survivors, and it is interesting to see who they are and why they're selling—as well as to alert any of you prospective purchasers to particularly noteworthy volumes.

First, though, let's take a look at the casualties. A classic example of too little, too late, is Warner's paperback adaptations of the now-demised *Kung Fu* TV show which never made it beyond the fourth slim book of the series. Mace, Manor's much-touted "first" paperback master of the martial arts, has quietly been allowed to slip into oblivion. And *K'ing Kung Fu* never made it beyond the seventh entry in the series, *MARK OF THE VULTURE*, which is just as well, since neither the authors nor the illustrators of the books seemed able to collect the appropriate monies due them from the publisher (who, I believe, has gone the way of all fly-by-night firms). Nothing more has been seen, either, of the Richard Dragon character in paperback. *Jim Dennis* appears content to allow his creation to continue coasting along in its comic-book incarnation.

The Jason Striker series, on the other hand, is one of the survivors. New novels by the *Piers Anthony*



Roberto Fuentes team appear periodically from Berkely—such as *AMAZON SLAUGHTER*, which I mentioned a couple months ago as their latest—and while the longevity of the series may be partially explained by the current lack of competition, I attribute it more to Anthony's expertise as an author and Fuentes' knowledge of the martial arts. There is an integrity and sincerity apparent in their works that alone is worth the output of a dozen hacks

laboring feverishly to fill the momentary demand of a bloated genre. They take time to produce each new effort, instead of attempting to bludgeon the market into submission through sheer volume of wordage. They're the good guys—and more power to 'em!

Another series which outlasted many of the others, although it may finally have floundered, is the *Black Samurai* by *Marc Olden*, from Signet. Four volumes have appeared since my survey of kung fu in the paperbacks (in *DEADLY HANDS* #80, and they are: *THE INQUISITION*, *THE WARLOCK*, *SWORD OF ALLAH*, and *THE KATANA*. The latter is the latest I have been able to find, and if it is indeed the last, then there are eight titles in total. I note that the length of the stories has dwindled considerably by the final volume, which may have been an economical measure on the part of the publisher, or merely an indication of boredom on the part of the author.

A series I avoided mentioning in my earlier overview, mostly because it can only marginally be called a

(Continued on page 64)

From novice to black belt—a Westerner's vivid personal account of Karate as it is actually taught and practiced in Japan today...
"An extraordinary memoir!"—Publishers Weekly

MOVING ZEN Karate as a Way to Gentleness

by C.W. Nicol



FIGHTING ARTS REVIEW



veriest of guidelines, the author produced a work of intense originality, influenced alike by *Edgar Rice Burroughs* and *Ian Fleming*, that was all his own and that utterly eclipsed the movie as a work of art. Unfortunately, that is the exception which proves the rule, and in most cases a hack writer is all too content to foist a flimsy fictionalization on the public for a quick buck. The most prolific of these is probably *Michael Avalone*, although of late *Ron Goulart* has been closing up on the lead with his adaptations of anything and everything, including the *Avenger*, *Vampirella*, and *Cleopatra Jones*. Two movies featuring the martial



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Based on the
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JULIEN**

arts Ms. have been released here, and both have been rendered into book form for Warner by the redoubtable Ron. Any soapbox philosopher could make a good case for our society and ourselves being entirely too derivative, but if you want to see how it can be taken to absurd lengths on one character, check out this bizarre by-line from the cover of *CLEOPATRA JONES AND THE*

CASINO OF GOLD: "A novel by *Ron Goulart*, based on a screenplay written and produced by *William Tennant*, based on the characters created by *Max Julien*." *Whew! It was *Harlan Ellison*, I believe, who postulated a direct correlation between the number of writers on a project and the attendant decline in quality, in his book of TV criticism, *THE GLASS TEAT*. I would say that same adage applies here.

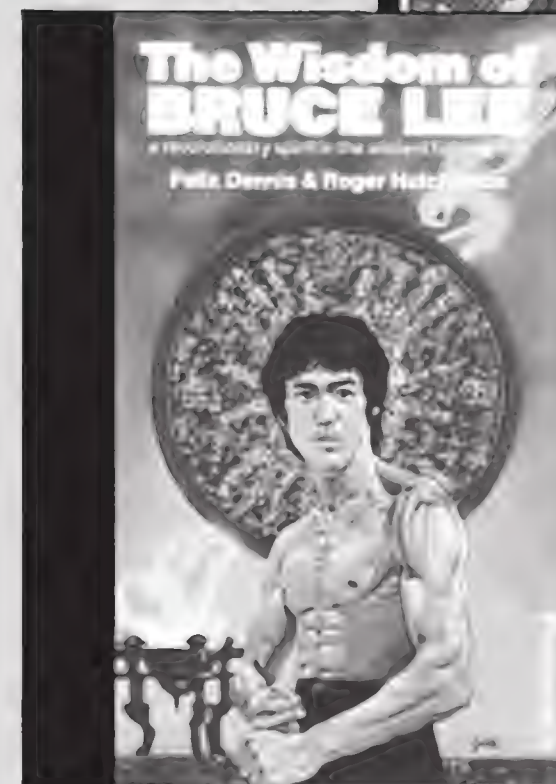
Moving from the realm of fiction into that of fact, there are a great many valuable volumes, some recent and some not so recent. This whole area deserves a separate survey of its own, so I'm merely going to mention a few current paperback releases that shouldn't escape your attention, assuming that you're already quite cognizant of *THE TAO OF JEET KUNE DO* by *Bruce Lee*, the various martial arts manuals by *Bruce Tegner*, and books of the like.

Available already in a second printing—perhaps a third, by the time you read this—is *ZEN KARATE* by *Randall Bassett*, from Warner Books. The title is fairly self-descriptive, and the tome is replete with drawings by *Charles Sovek* to

illustrate the moves described in the accompanying text. From Dell comes a superficially similar volume, *MOVING ZEN: KARATE AS A WAY TO GENTLENESS* by *C.W. Nicol*. This one, however, is not a manual, but instead a personal account of karate as it is taught and practiced in Japan today. Taken

together, the two books offer a complementary study of the subject of zen karate.

Finally, the first of several *Bruce Lee* paperbacks promised by Pinnacle Books has appeared, compiled by *Felix Dennis* and *Roger Hutchinson* under the title, *THE WISDOM OF BRUCE LEE*. Featuring a sixteen-page insert of selected photos, the book draws heavily on *THE LEGEND OF BRUCE LEE* by *Alex Black*, *BRUCE LEE: THE MAN ONLY I KNEW* by *Linda Lee*, and *THE TAO OF JEET KUNE DO* for source material. Nevertheless, it makes interesting reading, and is in fact reprinted from the original British Bunch Books first edition. Bunch seems to have a corner on the English martial arts market, since they also publish *Kung-Fu Monthly*, a magazine which is being cannibalized for a U.S. "poster



(Continued from page 40)

kung fu canon, deserves some consideration here owing to its occasional use of the martial arts. The *Baroness* books are ostensibly by *Paul Kenyon*, which is in reality a pseudonym for the entrepreneurial emperor of the popular paperback field, *Lyle Kenyon Engel*, who runs a syndicate that sells series stories (plotted by himself and produced by a corps of ghost writers) to ever-willing publishers. Engel's operation is similar to that of the *Stratemeyer* syndicate, which has endured since the turn of the century as a supplier of such venerable juvenile series as the *Hardy Boys* and *Tom Swift*, except that Engel angles for a slightly older readership. Therefore, you're never certain when reading one of these that the same author has written any two books in a row, and as you might consequently expect, the quality of the stories has a certain homogenous sameness, to allow for continuity. This is prose that issues from the fiction factory concept; individuality and outstanding achievement are not likely to be found while perusing one of these mass-produced packages.

Nonetheless, the martial arts mania has found its way into even these second-rate citizens of the book racks, and so I feel compelled to at least mention that fact, while at the same time warning potential readers of what to expect. *BLACK GOLD*, the eighth entry in the *Baroness* series, especially features the fighting arts. And the less said about the cover art on most of these paperback books, the better—this series, in particular, is adorned with atrocious illustrations.

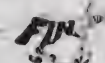
In the same general ghetto as the aforementioned syndicate-produced series are the novelizations of popular motion pictures. Rarely, if ever, do the adaptations transcend being merely mediocre translations of the movie scripts; in fact, I remember only one such transcendent effort that I have ever read, *TARZAN AND THE VALLEY OF GOLD* by *Fritz Lieber*. Utilizing the miserable movie of the same name as the

magazine" edition by *Fiona Press*, and which has attained to a fourth issue here, at the time of this writing.

That pretty well brings us up to date on kung fu in the paperbacks, people, and that means I'm calling it a column for this month. Happy reading—and remember to take care and stay aware!

Was es shaban!

—David Anthony Kraft



LIN SUN! ABE BROWN! BOB DIAMOND! LOTUS SHINCHUKO! HECTOR AYALA! Five people with little in common, save that they are *linked* by a gleaming *chain* from which are suspended the head and claws of a *golden tiger*. From the Tiger amulets' glow is passed *mastery* of the *martial arts*, and their lives have never been the same!

SONS OF THE TIGER



"WHEN THREE ARE CALLED AND STAND AS ONE, AS ONE THEY'LL FIGHT, THEIR WILL BE DONE FOR EACH IS BORN AHEAD, THE TIGER'S SON!"... BUT NOW THAT INSEPARABLE UNION HAS BEEN BREACHED!

ABE BROWN, STRANDED IN THE DESERT - EN ROUTE TO ALGERIA, HAS FALLEN CAPTIVE TO A STRANGE GROUP OF ARAB REVOLUTIONARIES, LED BY AN EVIL STRANGER WOMAN, HIS LIFE DEPENDS ON SOLVING THE RIDDLE OF THE MYSTERIOUS BLACK COSTUME WHICH SEEMS INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH HIS FUTURE!

BOB DIAMOND, IN CANADA, IS VICTIM TO A SUDDEN AVALANCHE, HIS CURRENT STATUS UNKNOWN!

LIN SUN AND LOTUS LEARN OF THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THEIR TWO FORMER COMRADES AND NOW THEY ATTEMPT, IN VAIN, TO FIND THEM!

JACK HART, JACK-OF-HEARTS-- THE WILD CARD! A QUEST FOR REVENGE OVER THE MURDER OF HIS FATHER HAS LED HIM TO SEEK OUT THE MAN KNOWN ONLY AS EL TIGRE! FINDING HIM IN HIS DESPERATE SEARCH-- HECTOR AYALA, THE WHITE TIGER, WHO WEARS THE DISCARDED AMULETS OF THE SONS, THE SEARCH HAS LED ACROSS THE ROOF-TOPS OF THE SOUTH BRONX, AND FINALLY TO...

FLESH of my FLESH!

OR THIS!

HER NAME WAS
MARGUERITA YVETTE
MOLINA. AGE 13.

SHE DIED, WHITE
TIGER, IN A BLAST
THAT WAS MEANT
FOR YOU.



Tones: Pete Lijauco

WHAT WAS IT SHE SAID
JUST BEFORE THE END?

SHE CALLED
YOU A HERO.

"CHEEKY, THAT'S
MY GANG NAME,
TIGER! YOU EVER
SEEN IT ON THE
SUBWAY?

"I'M
FAMOUS
... JUST
LIKE YOU!"

"PUERTO RICANS ARE
SUPPOSED TO BE JANITORS!
HECTOR! CAB DRIVERS!
NO RISKS - THEY STAY
ALIVE!

"THEY DON'T
GO OUT AND
BECOME
SUPER-HEROES!"

"YOU ARE
WRONG,
MY SISTER!
THIS ONE
DID!"

"THIS ONE
DID!"

"THIS ONE DID!!"

YOU ALL
RIGHT,
KID?

QUE?
OH... SI,
BLACKBYRD.

SI, I'M
FINE.

POOR KID. NO
AMBULANCE IS
GONNA HELP HER.

I DOUBT IF
SHE EVEN
KNEW WHAT
HIT HER!

ANYBODY
GET HER
NAME?

IT WAS
CHEEKY.

COME
AGAIN?

SHE CALLED
HERSELF...
CHEEKY.

HUNF!
FUNNY
KIDS. THEY
ALL GOT
NICK-
NAMES!

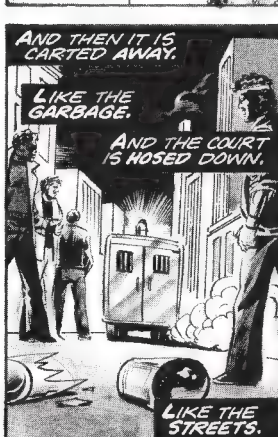
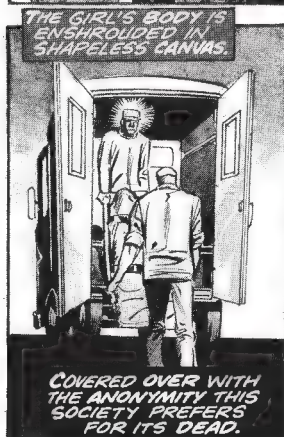
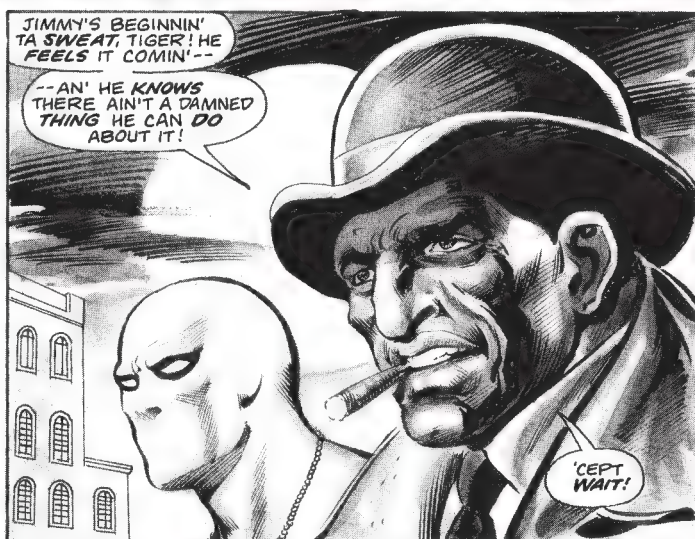
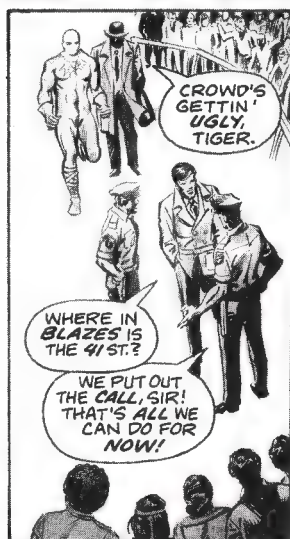
SI, SEÑOR.
IT IS EASY TO
HIDE BEHIND
SUCH A
NAME.

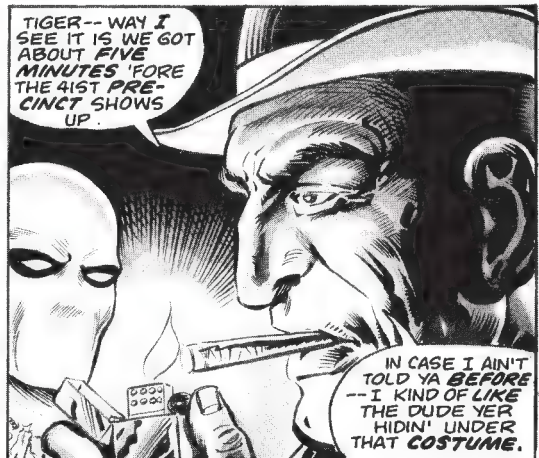
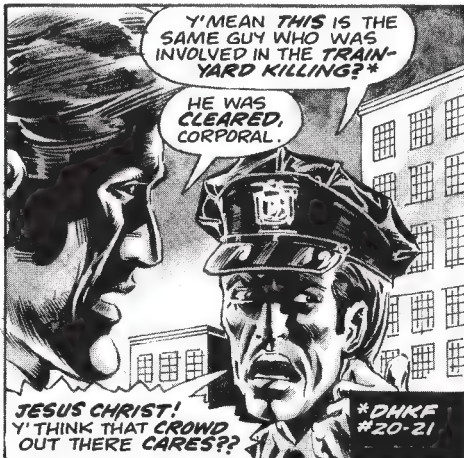
ALMOST
AS EASY
AS HIDING
BEHIND A
MASK!

WATCH THE CROWD, TIGER.

DO YOU FEEL
THEM SWELLING?
PULSING?

SOMETHING HAS
BROUGHT THE MANY
TOGETHER AS ONE.





"FUNNY THING IS, TIGER-- THAT THEY
FIGURE ON BEATIN' A WHITE DUDE.
AIN'T IT GONNA BE A KICKER WHEN
THEY RIP OFF YER MASK--"

"--AN' FIND OUT
YER ONE O' THEM?"

¡MURDER
POR EL
TIGRE
BLANCO!

KILL
THE PIG!

HERE
THEY COME,
BRO!

IT'S BEEN
NICE KNOWIN'
YOU!

¡TU
BLACK-
BYRD!

HOLD
YOUR
FIRE!

WHATEVER
YOU DO--DON'T
SHOOT!

THEN YOU TELL
US WHAT TO DO,
D'ANGELO!

FOR GOD'S SAKE--
TELL US WHAT
TO DO!!

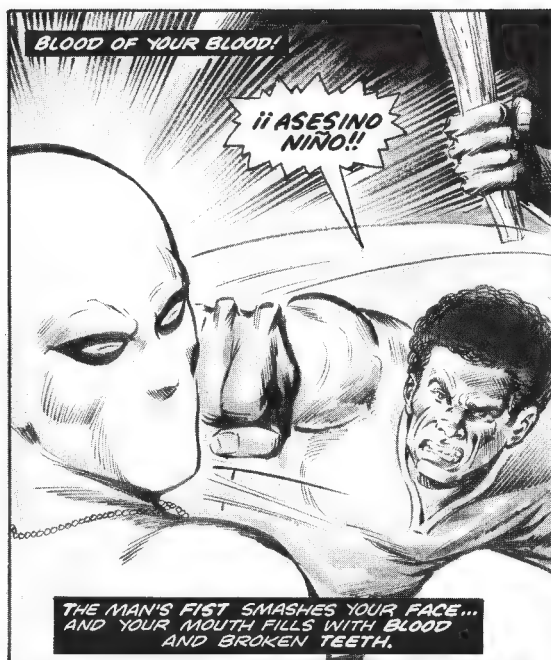
WRACK

GET
THEM,
AMIGOS!

GET
THEM!!

BETTER PULL
OUT THE FIRE-
WORKS, JIMMY!

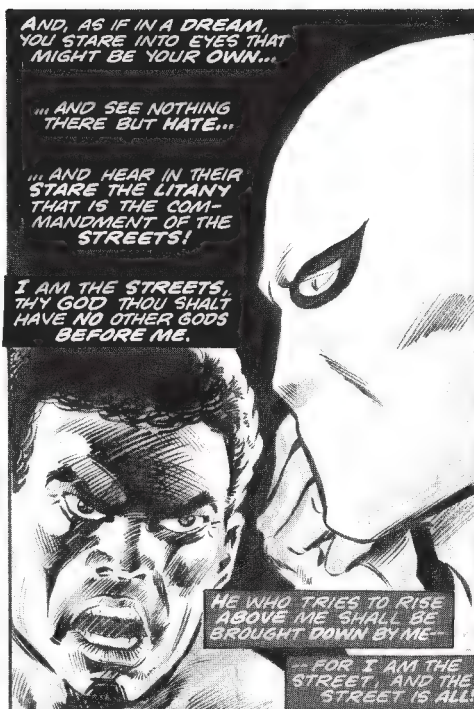
YOUR OWN, TIGER. FLESH
OF YOUR FLESH.



BLOOD OF YOUR BLOOD!

¡¡ ASESINO NIÑO!!

THE MAN'S FIST SMASHES YOUR FACE...
AND YOUR MOUTH FILLS WITH BLOOD
AND BROKEN TEETH.



AND, AS IF IN A DREAM,
YOU STARE INTO EYES THAT
MIGHT BE YOUR OWN...

... AND SEE NOTHING
THERE BUT HATE...

... AND HEAR IN THEIR
STARE THE LITANY
THAT IS THE COM-
MANDMENT OF THE
STREETS!

I AM THE STREETS,
THY GOD THOU SHALT
HAVE NO OTHER GODS
BEFORE ME.

HE WHO TRIES TO RISE
ABOVE ME SHALL BE
BROUGHT DOWN BY ME

FOR I AM THE
STREET, AND THE
STREET IS ALL!



BLESSED BE
THE STREET!

THEY'RE
NOT
STOPPIN'!

CRACK

DIE,
PUERCO!



THE BULLET HAS TORN A LONG
BURNING HOLE IN YOUR SIDE.

AND YOUR FLESH
CRIES OUT FOR
VENGEANCE ...



... WITH AN INSISTANCE THAT
WILL NOT LONG BE DENIED.

THEY
WANT THE
TIGER!

THEY'LL
TEAR HIM
APART!!



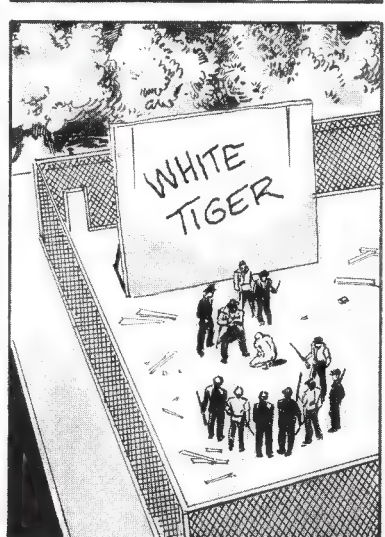
AND IN THAT VERY
MOMENT THAT YOU LASH
OUT AT YOUR ATTACKERS
FIGHTING BACK AGAINST
THE LAW OF THE STREETS...

... YOU KNOW YOU HAVE BETRAYED YOUR FLESH...









WORDS.



FOR ALL THE USE WE TRY
TO MAKE OF THEM...

... THEY JUST DON'T MEAN
A DAMNED THING, DO
THEY, TIGER?





YOU MIGHT CALL IT
A SLIGHT CASE OF--

REVENGE!!

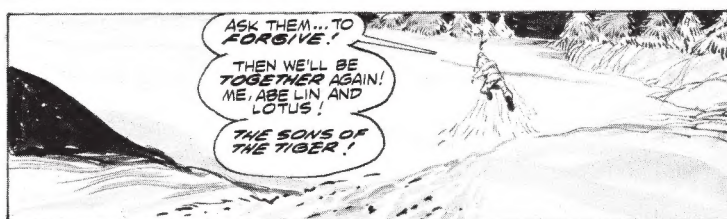
SSHH-SKROOWN!















Shadowcat

